

Porgy

by Dorothy Heyward
and DuBose Heyward





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Elizabeth J. Allen
Mount Holyoke
College.

P O R G Y

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A Play in Four Acts

BY
DOROTHY HEYWARD
AND
DUBOSE HEYWARD

From the Novel by Dubose Heyward



THE THEATRE GUILD ACTING VERSION

*With an Introduction on the
American Negro in Art*

GARDEN CITY
DOUBLEDAY, DORAN & COMPANY, INC.
NEW YORK
1928

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THE COUNTRY LIFE PRESS, GARDEN CITY, N. Y.

CHARACTERS

MARIA, keeper of the cookshop

JAKE, captain of the fishing fleet

LILY

MINGO

ANNIE

SPORTING LIFE

SERENA, Robbins's wife

ROBBINS, a young stevedore

JIM

CLARA, Jake's wife

PETER, the honey-man

PORGY, a crippled beggar

CROWN, a stevedore

CROWN'S BESS

A DETECTIVE

TWO POLICEMEN

UNDERTAKER

SCIPIO

SIMON FRAZIER, a lawyer

NELSON, a fisherman

ALAN ARCHDALE

THE CRAB MAN

THE CORONER

RESIDENTS OF CATFISH ROW, FISHERMEN, CHILDREN, STEVEDORES,
ETC.

*The action of the play takes place in Charleston, S. C.,
at the present time.*

THE CAST OF THE THEATRE GUILD PRODUCTION
As presented at the Guild Theatre, New York, October 10, 1927

P O R G Y

A play in four acts

By DOROTHY and DUBOSE HEYWARD

The production directed by Rouben Mamoulian

Settings by Cleon Throckmorton

CAST—in order of appearance

<i>Maria, keeper of the cookshop</i>	Georgette Harvey
<i>Jake, captain of the fishing fleet</i>	Wesley Hill
<i>Lily</i>	Dorothy Paul
<i>Mingo</i>	R. J. Huey
<i>Annie</i>	Ella Madison
<i>Sporting Life</i>	Percy Verwayne
<i>Serena, Robbins's wife</i>	Rose MacClendon
<i>Robbins, a young stevedore</i>	Lloyd Gray
<i>Jim, a fisherman</i>	Peter Clark
<i>Clara, Jake's wife</i>	Mary Young
<i>Peter, the honey-man</i>	Hayes Pryor
<i>Porgy, a crippled beggar</i>	Frank Wilson
<i>Crown, a stevedore</i>	Jack Carter
<i>Crown's Bess</i>	Evelyn Ellis
<i>A Detective</i>	Stanley de Wolfe
<i>Two Policemen</i>	{ Hugh Rennie Maurice McRae
<i>Undertaker</i>	Leigh Whipper
<i>Scipio</i>	Melville Greene
<i>Simon Frazier, a lawyer</i>	A. B. Comathiere
<i>Nelson, a fisherman</i>	G. Edward Brown
<i>Alan Archdale</i>	Edward Fielding
<i>The Crab Man</i>	Leigh Whipper
<i>The Coroner</i>	Garrett Minturn
<i>Residents of Catfish Row, fishermen, children, stevedores, etc.</i>	
Clarissa Blue, Marguerite Booth, Lillian Cowan, Muriel Collins, Zora Donahoo, Dorothy Embry, Catherine Francis, Ella Gordon, Rosa Johnson, Dorothy West, Musa Williams, Annie Wilson.	
Frank Allen, Charles Bailey, Robert Bonner, Duncan Bourne, Richard Bruce, Edward Chavers, Edward Perry, Eugene Riddick, Charles Taylor, Philip Thomas, Wallace Thurman, Lafayette Walker, Smith Reed.	

Children

Eddie Williams, Ruth Williams, Eunice Belborda, Sylvia Harrigan, Thomas Trisven, William Carroll, Martha Donahoo.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT I

Scene I—Catfish Row. A Summer Evening.
Scene II—Serena's Room. The Following Night.
(Intermission five minutes)

ACT II

Scene I—Catfish Row. A Month Later.
Scene II—A Palmetto Jungle. Evening the Same Day.
(Intermission ten minutes)

ACT III

Scene I—Catfish Row. Before Dawn. A Week Later.
Scene II—Serena's Room. Dawn of the Following Day.

ACT IV

Scene I—Catfish Row. The Next Night.
Scene II—Catfish Row. The Next Afternoon.
Scene III—Catfish Row. Five Days Later.

Place—Charleston, S. C.
Time—The Present.

TECHNICAL

Stage Manager—Maurice McRae
Assistants—Cheryl Crawford, Hugh Rennie

The THEATRE GUILD, Inc.

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INTRODUCTION

My preoccupation with the primitive Southern Negro as a subject for art derives from the often unworthy, but certainly powerfully motivating quality of curiosity. What, I wondered, was the unique characteristic in the life of the people who formed the sub-stratum of the society in which I had been born that endowed them with the power to stir me suddenly and inexplicably to tears or laughter; when the chaste beauty of the old city created by my own people awakened a distinctly different and more intellectual sort of delight? What was the mysterious force that for generations had resisted the pressure of our civilization and underlaid the apparently haphazard existence of the Negro with a fundamental unity? Why were certain colour combinations wrong in a formal garden, and yet capable of provoking a mysterious excitement when delivered against the vision from the polychromatic pageantry of a Negro lodge parade? What was it about a file of stevedores across a pier-head that made something inside of me follow them to the hold of a ship and wait, counting the moments, for their return? What was the quality in a spiritual sung in the secrecy of some back

room that brought the chance listener up short against the outer wall with a contraction of the solar plexus, and lachrymal glands that he was powerless to control?

Slowly, as I watched and listened, there grew within me the conviction that this life which was going on within our own, yet was apart from it, possessed a certain definite, but indefinable quality that remained with my own people only in a more or less vestigial state, and at times seemed to have departed altogether like our gills and tails. From admiration of the manifestations of this secret law my feeling grew to one of envy; and so, from the beginning, my approach to the subject was never one of pity for, or philanthropic urge to succour, an unfortunate race. I saw the primitive Negro as the inheritor of a source of delight that I would have given much to possess. Why, then, should I weep over him?

Strangely enough, it was not until later that I identified this secret law as rhythm. In fact, not until it had, in my imagination, emerged as what I can only describe as a sort of race personality that dominated and swayed the mass, making of it a sum vastly greater than the total of its individual entities. It was at first this basic law with which I was preoccupied. The behaviour of individuals was a secondary consideration, because I felt that it derived from the actuating principle.

Then one day a paragraph from the court proceed-

ings of the *Charleston News & Courier* caught my attention, and immediately personalized the vast abstraction with which I was struggling. It was, I feel, significant enough to justify quotation:

Samuel Smalls, who is a cripple and is familiar to King Street with his goat and cart, was held for the June term of court of sessions on an aggravated assault charge. It is alleged that on Saturday night he attempted to shoot Maggie Barnes at number four Romney Street. His shots went wide of the mark. Smalls was up on a similar charge some months ago and was given a suspended sentence.

Here was something amazing. I had been familiar with the tragic figure of the beggar making his rounds of the Charleston streets. Thinking in terms of my own environment, I had concluded that such a life could never lift above the dead level of the commonplace. And yet this crushed, serio-comic figure, over on the other side of the colour wall, had known not only one, but two, tremendous moments. Into the brief paragraph one could read passion, hate, despair.

Inquiry on my part added only one fact to the brief newspaper note. Smalls had attempted to escape in his wagon, and had been run down and captured by the police patrol.

I am particularly anxious to have these details written into this record. Already the romantically inclined have forgotten that there was a beggar named Smalls, and speak of him only as Porgy, and the story to which

I have given that name has assumed the significance of a biographical sketch. The obscure beggar with his malodorous goat bids fair to become a local legend.

As one with a profound respect for the authentic in folklore, I desire to record the exact point at which fact ends and the unfettered hand of the story writer takes up a tale.

To Smalls I make acknowledgment of my obligation. From contemplation of his real, and deeply moving, tragedy sprang *Porgy*, a creature of my imagination, who synthesized for me a number of divergent impressions and emotions, and upon whom, being my own creation, I could impose my own white man's conception of a summer of aspiration, devotion, and heart-break across the colour wall.

In fact from the inception of the story I had been sensible of my audacity in attempting an interpretation of the inner life of an alien people. For this reason the presentation of the play with a Negro cast, two years after publication of the novel, represents a much closer approximation of an artistic ideal.

When dramatization was first suggested to me by Dorothy Heyward I was skeptical, believing that the difficulties would only be multiplied by the uncompromising objectivity of the stage. It was not until she submitted her first rough draft of the manuscript that I agreed to the experiment and offered my services as collaborator. It was obvious to both of us that, in

spite of the many difficulties, the play would permit of the interpretation of the story by the race with which it was concerned. Our first resolution was that we would stand or fall with a Negro cast. That if no such cast was yet available we would hold the play indefinitely rather than resort to the use of disguised white actors.

Dramatization of a novel, always a difficult and hazardous undertaking, was further complicated in the case of *Porgy* by our determination to give the flow of life—which I have striven and, I fear, with only partial success, to define—its proper place in the canvas. That it was bigger than the individual who moved upon it was evident, for it had driven its dark stream on under our civilization, while generations came, were swept forward by it, and vanished. As with singing, where the Negro seldom excels as a soloist and yet with three or four friends picked up almost at random creates a successful chorus, so in their work and play it is the mass rhythms, the concerted movements, the crowd laughter, the communal interrelationships of the Negro quarter that differentiate it most sharply from its white slum neighbour. We felt that the play in order to possess any degree of verisimilitude must show its people moving in response to the deep undertow of this tide; that the background itself must be an active, significant factor, a powerfully flowing stream of movement, colour, and sound, upon which the story could

depend for its motivation as though it were a dominating human force. That this was a highly dangerous experiment we well knew. We were also aware that it was diametrically opposed to the Broadway formula; and that it was one in which we could hope to awaken the curiosity of Broadway we doubted. We even questioned in our own minds whether, with the best intentions, it would be physically possible to capture this elusive quality and make it come to life upon a stage. That we attained a measure of success has been due to an extraordinarily fortunate sequence of circumstances. Had the Theatre Guild not made its small beginning ten years ago, and had not a sympathetic public assisted it in building up the financially strong and artistically enlightened organization that it is to-day, there would have been no adequate producer for the play. Its many difficulties and highly experimental nature would have militated fatally against it with a purely commercial stage, and the necessarily heavy expense of production would have been a serious obstacle in the way of a smaller art group.

Having decided to produce "Porgy," the Guild commissioned Cleon Throckmorton, a native Southerner, to design the sets, and, as an earnest of their desire for complete authenticity, despatched him to Charleston to study the environment. As a result, the great tenement with its court and many windows, in which most of the action takes place, is an actual stage adap-

tation of the building that I had in mind when I first wrote *Catfish Row* into the novel.

The delicate task of direction was then placed in the hands of Rouben Mamoulian, a young Armenian, born in the Caucasus, and trained in the Moscow Art Theatre. I think that at the time even the Guild had very little idea of the extent of their good fortune in making this choice. That he had already done brilliant work we were aware, but of his power to observe and assimilate new material, and his genius for rhythm, we had yet to learn. Like Throckmorton he visited Charleston and absorbed and recorded impressions and, incidentally, under the spell of the lovely and unique old city, he developed an enormous enthusiasm for his task.

Of the many unknown quantities that were encountered in the highly experimental production of "*Porgy*," to me the most interesting, the most unknown, and, in the final analysis, the most satisfactorily solved was that presented by the cast.

On the first day of reading and attempting to assign parts we found ourselves in the library of the theatre with a group of Negroes who had been located during months of searching by the casting director and been asked to attend and try out for parts. In the white theatre casting is a comparatively simple matter. The producer in all probability has his principals in mind before he contracts for the play, having seen each in

a certain type of rôle. He, therefore, casts with a degree of certainty which is based upon known experience. But unfortunately, America has not yet had an opportunity of developing a Negro theatre with its proven performers. Our only procedure was to use a drag-net, and bring in every available actor of the least promise. And there we sat facing each other, on the brink of a new and mutual adventure and wondering what would come of it.

With a cast of more than thirty-five people, and with very few from whom to choose, casting resolved itself into taking those that were there and assigning parts, much as is done in a stock company. It was out of the question to search further for a preconceived type for a particular character. We found this painful at first. The Bess of my novel had been a gaunt, tragic figure such as I had often seen on the Charleston waterfront. The part was given to Evelyn Ellis, young, slender, and immediately noticeable for a certain radiant charm. Frank Wilson, whose work in "In Abraham's Bosom" had thrilled us by its emotional power, was equally far from our idea of what Porgy should look like in the flesh. It was not until rehearsals had proved their ability to interpret the parts emotionally that I felt them to be really Porgy and Bess. But, on the other hand, Georgette Harvey was a reincarnation of Maria. Rose MacClendon was perfect as the

Catfish Row aristocrat, Serena; R. J. Huey was born for Mingo, and Dorothy Paul for Lily.

Then the long and nerve-racking ordeal of rehearsal commenced. Many of our people had been trained for the vaudeville stage, and what they had learned had to be laboriously broken down before they could start out correctly. It was then that we realized the tremendous asset that we had in our director. Rouben Mamoulian was not merely a director: he was a creative instructor as well. In the Negro cast he had wonderfully plastic material. They liked him. It was amazing to watch a cast of New York people, most of whom had never seen the South Atlantic Seaboard, slowly bring to life upon a New York stage a living representation of a Charleston Negro tenement, with its laughter and its tragedy.

Then we began to realize the interesting fact that the labour that was being put into atmosphere was contributing directly to the acting of the cast, helping them to forget that they were playing parts, and aiding in the development of the naturalistic performance which they eventually attained. The use of rhythm in the play as it occurs without conscious effort in the life of the primitive Negro was a telling means toward this end. We used the spirituals as they actually occur to express emotional stress when the limited spoken vocabulary becomes inadequate. We employed the rhythmic, spontaneous prayer with which

the primitive Negro makes his supplications; the unfaltering rhythm of time, expressed in the ebb and flow of day and night, and the chiming of St. Michael's bells; and the crowd movements, with their shifting pattern of colour and sound. ✓

As the play took shape and the cast began to merge their own identities into those of the characters that they represented, we became aware that the thing for which we had hoped was actually materializing, and that the performance was developing into a collaboration upon a broad scale.

One day, Leigh Whipper, who plays the undertaker, came to us and introduced himself as a fellow Charlestonian. His boyhood had been spent in the old city. We got him to help us check the atmosphere of the play. Then he asked if I remembered the old crab vendor who had been a figure about the streets years ago. I did remember him only vaguely. Our undertaker then illustrated him for us. "Go ahead and put him in Catfish Row," we told him. The result is the "bit" in the second act of the production upon the Guild stage, of which he is not only the actor, but playwright as well.

Another "bit" which appeared on the Guild Stage, but is not to be found in the printed play, is the quarrel between Annie and Jake at the Sea Island picnic. The authors have no claim to it. It is a spontaneous collaboration by Annie (Ella Madison) and

Jake (Wesley Hill). In fact this instinctive, creative gift is the most outstanding characteristic of the Negro as an actor, and one can never be quite sure when and where it will strike, or at what moment an irresistible improvisation will leap into the dialogue.

I have been asked for my impressions of the Northern Negro as compared with those of whom I write in "Porgy." In temperament, so far as I have noticed, there is no difference. There is the same resilience of spirits, the same sense of humour—especially for the ridiculous—and the same immediate emotional responsiveness which fits them so admirably for the stage. But I feel that there is one decided and very interesting difference—one which may be merely climatic, or which may spring from the broader opportunity for the Negro in the North, with its resultant incentive to effort.

It is characteristic of the Southern Negro that he will work magnificently under excitement, or for a reasonably short shift, but that on a long, routine job of sustained effort he loses interest. I have been deeply impressed with the tenacity and determination which the "Porgy" cast have put into their work.

But it has not been only in the mass, but as individuals also, that I have found my co-workers on the play interesting. In the usual play the habitual theatre-goer finds an actor of whom he is more than apt to know. His history (thanks to the industry of his press

agent) is public knowledge. In some cases there is even a family tradition going back through several generations of actor ancestors. Confronted by a group of Negro artists who are not generally known to the public, one wonders about their background, and eventually one inquires. Rose MacClendon is remembered for her distinguished stairway descent in "Deep River" and, with Evelyn Ellis, in "Rosanne," and again with Frank Wilson and R. J. Huey in "In Abraham's Bosom." With most of the other players "Porgy" means a Broadway début.

It is a far cry from the music and dancing of "Shuffle Along," "Runnin' Wild," and the coloured Night Club Revue, to the spirituals, with their depth and sincerity, and the rhythmic swaying that accompanies them, and yet from these shows came many of the voices that are heard in the mourning scene over the body of the murdered Robbins.

That the Negro has already made his place in the American drama there can be no doubt. The period following his physical emancipation developed in the race a protective facility for dramatic imitation. He was too preoccupied with his impersonation of the farceur, that he was supposed to be, to be himself. The minstrel show and vaudeville stage marked the limit of his opportunity. Now at the dawn of an artistic emancipation he may reach back across the years, forgetting for the time the well-worn mask of laughter,

and speak seriously of his own themes, his hopes and aspirations. That, almost without preparation, he is able to acquit himself with honour in serious drama is not a matter for wonder. He has always possessed a natural talent, and he is at last permitted to be merely himself.

DUBOSE HEYWARD.

P O R G Y

ACT ONE

P O R G Y

ACT ONE

Scene One

Before the rise of each curtain, the bells of St. Michael's, adjacent to the Negro quarter of old Charleston, chime the hour. The chimes are heard occasionally throughout the play.

Before the rise of first curtain, St. Michael's chimes the quarters and strikes eight.

The curtain rises on the court of Catfish Row, now a Negro tenement in a fallen quarter of Charleston, but in Colonial days one of the finest buildings of the aristocracy. The walls rise around a court, except a part of the rear wall of the old house, which breaks to leave a section of lower wall pierced at its centre by a massive wrought-iron gate of great beauty which hangs unsteadily between brick pillars surmounted by pineapples carved of Italian marble.

By day, the walls of the entire structure present a mottled colour effect of varying pastel shades, caused by the atmospheric action on many layers of colour

wash. A brilliant note is added by rows of blooming flame-coloured geraniums in old vegetable tins on narrow shelves attached to each window sill. All of the windows are equipped with dilapidated slat shutters, some of which are open, others closed, but with the slats turned so that anyone inside could look out without being seen. The floor of the spacious court is paved with large flagstones, and these gleam in faintly varying colours under their accumulated grime.

Beyond the gate and above the wall, one sees a littered cobbled street, an old gas street lamp, and, beyond that again, the blue expanse of the bay with Fort Sumter showing on the horizon. Over the wall can be seen masts and spars of fishing boats lying on the beach.

By night, the court depends for its illumination upon the wheezing gas lamp, and the kerosene lamps and lanterns that come and go in the hands of the occupants of the Row.

At left front is PORGY's room (door and window), and beyond it, an arch letting on an inside yard. The pump stands against the wall right back; then, on around right wall, SERENA's doorway, with her window above it, two more doors, then the door to MARIA's cookshop. Centre right is seen SERENA's wash bench, and near right wall, well down front, is table on which MARIA serves her meals during the warm weather.

As the curtain rises, revealing Catfish Row on a

summer evening, the court reëchoes with African laughter and friendly banter in "Gullah," the language of the Charleston Negro, which still retains many African words. The audience understands none of it. Like the laughter and movement, the twanging of a guitar from an upper window, the dancing of an urchin with a loose, shuffling step, it is a part of the picture of Catfish Row as it really is—an alien scene, a people as little known to most Americans as the people of the Congo.

Gradually, it seems to the audience that they are beginning to understand this foreign language. In reality, the "Gullah" is being tempered to their ears, spoken more distinctly with the African words omitted.

It is Saturday night, and most of the residents of Catfish Row are out in the court, sitting watching the crap shooters or moving to and fro to visit with one neighbour, then another. Among those present are:

MARIA, matriarch of the court, massive in proportions and decisive in action.

ANNIE, middle-aged, quiet, and sedate.

LILY, loud, good-natured, the court hoyden.

CLARA, who has her baby in her arms. She is scarcely more than a girl and has a sweet, wistful face.

JAKE, CLARA's husband. A successful captain of the fishing fleet; good-looking, good-natured.

"SPORTING LIFE," bootlegger to Catfish Row; a slender, overdressed, high-yellow Negro.

MINGO, young and lazy.

JIM and NELSON, fishermen.

SCIPIO, a boy of twelve, one of the numerous offspring of ROBBINS and SERENA.

ROBBINS and SERENA are still in their room on second floor. SERENA is seen occasionally as she moves back and forth past her lighted window. She is a self-respecting "white folks" negress, of about thirty.

The men are gathering for their Saturday-night crap game. They are grouped between gate and PORGY'S room. JAKE is squatting right, MINGO center rear, and SPORTING LIFE is left, forming triangle. A smoking kerosene lamp is in centre of group, and the men are tossing and retrieving their dice in the circle of light.

JAKE

[Rolling]: Seems like dese bones don't gib me nuttin' but box cars to-night. It was de same two weeks ago, an' de game broke me. I ain't likes dat luck.

[SPORTING LIFE produces his own dice, and throws with a loud grunt and snap of his fingers. MINGO snatches the dice and balances them in his hand.]

SPORTING LIFE

Damn yo', gib me dem bones.

[MINGO holds him off with one hand while he hands the dice to JAKE.]

MINGO

Whut yo' say to dese, Jake?

JAKE

[*Examining them*]: Dem's de same cock-eye bones whut clean de gang out las' week. Ef dey rolls in dis game, I rolls out. [*Hands the dice back to SPORTING LIFE.*] Ebberybody rolls de same bones in dis game, Sportin' Life—take 'em or leabe 'em.

[ROBBINS comes from door, rear right. He is a well-set-up Negro of about thirty. The window above him opens, and SERENA leans from sill.]

SERENA

[*Pleadingly*]: Honey-boy!

ROBBINS

Now, fuh Gawd's sake, don't start dat again. I goin' play—git dat.

SERENA

Ef yo' didn't hab licker in yo' right now, yo' wouldn't talk like dat. Yo' know whut yo' done promise' me las' week.

ROBBINS

All right, den, I wouldn't shoot no more dan fifty cent. [*Joins the group.*]

[CLARA paces up and down the court, singing softly to her baby.]

Dat ole lady ob mine hell on joinin' de buryin' lodge. I says, spen' um while yo' is still alibe an' kickin'.

[*Picks up dice. Throws them with a loud grunt.*] I ain't see no buzzard 'round here yit.

[JIM, a big, strong-looking fellow, saunters over to the group of crap players. A cotton hook swings from his belt.]

JIM

Lor', I is tire' dis night. I'm t'inkin' ob gettin' out ob de cotton business. Mebby it all right fo' a nigger like Crown dat Gawd start to make into a bull, den change He min'. But it ain't no work fo' a man.

JAKE

Better come 'long on de *Sea Gull*. I gots place fo' nudder fishermans.

JIM

Dat suit me. Dis cotton hook hab swung he las' bale ob cotton. Here, Scipio, yo' wants a cotton hook?

[*Throws the hook to SCIPIO, who takes it eagerly, fastens it at his waist, and goes about court playing that he is a stevedore, lifting objects with the*

hook and pretending that they are of tremendous weight. CLARA passes the group, crooning softly.]

CLARA

“Hush, li’l baby, don’ yo’ cry.
Fadder an’ mudder born to die.”

JAKE

[Standing up]: Whut! dat chile ain’t ’sleep yit. Gib ’um to me. I’ll fix um fo’ yo’. *[Takes baby from CLARA, rocks it in his arms, sings]:*

“My mammy tells me, long time ago,
Son, don’ yo’ marry no gal yo’ know.
Spen’ all yo’ money—eat all yo’ bread,
Gone to Savannah, lef’ yo’ fo’ dead.”

[Several of the men join in on the last line. JAKE rocks the baby more violently and begins to shuffle. CLARA watches anxiously.]

“Spen’ all yo’ money. Steal all yo’ clothes.
Whut will become of yo’, Gawd only knows.”

[The light leaves SERENA’S window. JAKE swings the baby back to CLARA.]

Dere now! Whut I tells yo’. He ’sleep already.

[The baby wails. The men laugh. CLARA carries baby

PORGY

to her room. Closes door. SERENA comes from her door with a lamp which she sets on her wash bench. She sits beside it and looks anxiously toward crap players.]

MARIA

[*To SERENA*]: Whut worryin' yo', Serena? Yo' gots one ob de bes' mens in Catfish Row. Why yo' ain't let um play widout pickin' on um?

SERENA

He gots licker in um to-night, an' Robbins ain't de same man wid licker.

[*MINGO is rolling and retrieving the dice. While he does so, he looks and laughs at ROBBINS, then sings at him.*]

MINGO

[*Singing*]:

“My mammy tell me, long time ago,
Son don't yo' marry no gal yo' know.”

[*Speaking to ROBBINS*]: Ought to be single like Porgy an' me. Den yo' kin shoot bones widout git pick on.

ROBBINS

Oh, my lady all right; only 'cep' she don' like craps. She born a w'ite folks nigger. She people b'long to

Gob'nor Rutledge. Ain't yo' see Miss Rutledge come to see she when she sick?

MARIA

[*Overhearing, to SERENA*]: Oh, dat Miss Rutledge come to see yuh?

SERENA

Sho! yo' ain' know dat?

MARIA

She eber sell any ob she ole clothes?

SERENA

Not she. But sometime she gib 'em away to de nigger'.

MARIA

[*Sighing*]: I wish I could git a dress off she. She de firs' pusson I eber see whut hiped an' busted 'zac'ly like me.

ROBBINS

[*Boasting*]: Yes, suh! my lady——

SPORTING LIFE

Yo' bes' sabe yo' talk fo' dem dice. Bones ain't got no patience wid 'omen.

MINGO

Dat's de trut'. Course dey can't git along togedder. Dey is all two atter de same nigger money.

PORGY

JAKE

Annie dere likes de single life, ain't it, Annie? Whut become ob dat ole fisherman used to come fo' see yo'?

ANNIE

He ain't fisherman.

JAKE

Whut he do?

ANNIE

Him ain't do nuttin' mos' all de time. Odder time, him is a shoe carpenter.

[*The voice of PETER, the old "honey man," is heard in the street, drawing nearer and nearer.*]

PETER

Here comes de honey man. Yo' gots honey?—Yes, ma'am, I gots honey.—Yo' gots honey in de comb?—Yes, ma'am, I gots honey in de comb.—Yo' gots honey cheap?—Yes, ma'am, my honey cheap.

[*PETER enters gate and closes it behind him. He is a gentle, kindly Negro, verging on senility. A large wooden tray covered with a white cloth is balanced on his head.*]

LILY

[*Going to meet him*]: Well, here come my ole man.
[*Takes tray from his head and shouts in his ear*]:
Now gimme de money.

[He hands her some coins. She points to bench.]

Now go sit an' res'.

[He does as he is told. She places tray in her room and returns to circle.]

MARIA

Yo', Scipio! Here come Porgy! Open de gate fo' uh!

[PORGY drives up to the gate in his soap-box chariot.

He is a crippled beggar of the Charleston streets, who has done much to overcome his handicap of almost powerless legs by supplying himself with a patriarchal and very dirty goat, which draws a cart made of an upturned soap box, on two lop-sided wheels, which bears the inscription, "WILD ROSE SOAP, PURE AND FRAGRANT."

PORGY is no longer young, and yet not old. There is a suggestion of the mystic in his thoughtful, sensitive face. He is black, with the almost purple blackness of unadulterated Congo blood.

SCIPIO reluctantly interrupts his performance on a mouth organ, shuffles across court, and opens one side of the ponderous gate.

PORGY drives through and pulls up beside the crap ring.]

JAKE

Here de ole crap shark!

PORGY

PORGY

All right, Mingo! Jake! Gib' me a han' out dis wagon. I gots a pocket full ob de buckra money, an' he goin' to any man whut gots de guts fo' shoot 'em off me!

[MINGO and JAKE help PORGY from wagon to a seat on ground at left front of circle. SCIPIO leads goat away through arch at rear left.]

[JIM saunters to gate and looks out.]

ROBBINS

All right, mens! Roll 'em! We done wait long 'nough.

JIM

[Returning to group]: Yo' bes' wait for Crown. I seen um comin', takin' de whole sidewalk, an' he look like he ain't goin' stan' no foolin'.

PORGY

Is Bess wid um?

JAKE

Listen to Porgy! I t'ink he sof' on Crown's Bess!
[All the men laugh.]

PORGY

Gawd make cripple to be lonely. T'ain't no use for um to be sof' on a 'oman.

MARIA

Porgy gots too good sense to look twice at dat licker-guzzlin' slut.

LILY

Licker-guzzlin'! It takes more'n licker fo' sati'fy Crown's Bess.

SERENA

Happy dus'! Dat's what it take! Dat gal Bess ain't fit for Gawd-fearin' ladies to 'sociate wid!

SPORTING LIFE

Sistuh! You needn't worry! Gawd-fearin' ladies is de las' t'ing on eart' Bess is a-wantin' for 'sociate wid.

PORGY

Can't yo' keep yo' mout' off Bess! Between de Gawd-fearin' ladies an' de Gawd-damnin' men, dat gal ain't gots no chance.

JAKE

Ain't I tells yo' Porgy sof' on um?
[*More laughter.*]

PORGY

I ain't neber swap one word wid she.
[Crown and Bess appear at gate. Crown is lurching

slightly and BESS is piloting him through the entrance.

CROWN is a huge Negro of magnificent physique, a stevedore on the cotton wharfs. He is wearing blue denim pants and tan shirt with a bright bandanna about his neck. From his belt hangs a long gleaming cotton hook.

BESS is slender, but sinewy; very black, wide nostrils, and large, but well-formed mouth. She flaunts a typical, but debased, Negro beauty.

From the occupants of Catfish Row there are cries of, "Here comes Big Boy!" "'Low, Crown!" "'Low, Bess," etc.]

CROWN

[To SPORTING LIFE]: All right, high stepper. Gib us a pint, an' make it damn' quick.

[SPORTING LIFE pulls a flask from his hip pocket and hands it to CROWN. CROWN jerks out cork and takes a long pull.]

[To BESS]: Pay um, Bess!

[BESS settles for the bottle, then takes her seat by CROWN, ignoring the women of the court.

CROWN hands her the flask, from which she takes a long pull. She meets SERENA's eyes, laughs at their hostility, and at once extends the bottle to ROBBINS.]

BESS

Hab one to de Gawd-fearin' ladies. Dere's nuttin' else like 'em—t'ank Gawd!

[ROBBINS *tries to resist, but the fumes of raw liquor are too much for him. He takes a deep drink.*

CROWN *snatches the bottle from him, gulps the entire remaining contents, and shatters it on the flags behind him.*

The crap circle is now complete. The positions are as follows:

Rear

X BESS

X CROWN

X DADDY

PETER

X MINGO

X SPORTING LIFE

X JAKE

X ROBBINS

X PORGY

Footlights.

[CROWN *throws coin down before him.*]

CROWN

I'm talkin' to yo' mans. Anybody answerin' me?

[*They all throw down money.*]

PORGY

ROBBINS

[*To JAKE*]: An' dem fine chillen ob mine!

CROWN

Shet yo' damn mout' an' t'row.

ROBBINS

[*Taken aback and rolling hastily*]: Box cars again!
[*They all roar with laughter.*]

MINGO

Cover 'em, brudder, cover 'em.

ROBBINS

Cover hell! I goin' pass 'em along an' see ef I kin break my luck.

MINGO

He lady ain't 'low um but fifty cent, an' he can't take no chance wid bad luck.

[*All laugh at ROBBINS.*]

BESS

[*With a provocative look at SERENA*]: Dat all right, Honey-boy, I'll stake yo' when yo' four bits done gone.

SERENA

[To ROBBINS]: Go ahead an' play, yo' ain't need no charity off no she-devils.

BESS

[To ROBBINS]: See whut I git fuh yo'. De she-gawds is easy when yo' knows de way.

[CROWN *claps his hand over BESS's mouth.*]

CROWN

Shet yo' damn mout'. Yo' don' gib Mingo no chance to talk to de bones.

[JAKE *has cast and lost, and the dice are now with MINGO, who is swinging them back and forth in his hand. Sings.*]

MINGO

"Ole snake-eye, go off an' die.

Ole man seben, come down from Heaben."

[*Grunts, throws, and snaps fingers.*] Seben! [*Scoops up dice.*]

CROWN

I ain't see dat seben yit. [*Snatches MINGO's hand and opens fingers. Looks at dice.*] Yo' done tu'n um ober.

MINGO

[*To Circle*]: Whut I t'row?

[*Cries of "Seben," "Jus' as he say," etc. MINGO pulls in pot.*]

CROWN

Well, dere's more'n one nigger done meet he Gawd fuh pullin' 'em in 'fore I reads 'em. See? An' I'm a-sayin' it ober to-night.

[*All ante again.*]

MINGO

Come home again to yo' pappy. [*Shoots.*] Four to make! Come four! [*Shoots.*]

[*Cries of "Seben," "Crapped out," etc. MINGO passes dice to CROWN.*]

CROWN

Come clean, yo' little black-eyed bitches! [*Shoots.*]
[*Cries of "Six," "Six to make," etc. CROWN takes up bones and produces rabbit foot from pocket. He touches dice with it.*]

Kiss rabbit foot. [*Shoots.*]

SPORTING LIFE

[*Reaching for dice*]: Crapped out! Come to your pappy.

[*CROWN extends a huge arm and brushes him back. He tries to focus his eyes on dice.*]

ROBBINS

Crown too cock-eyed drunk to read um. What he is say, Bess?

BESS

Seben.

CROWN

[*Scowls at ROBBINS, then turns to SPORTING LIFE*]:
I ain't drunk 'nough to read 'em, dat's de trouble.
Licker ain't strong 'nough. Gimme a pinch ob happy
dus', Sportin' Life.

[*SPORTING LIFE takes from his pocket a small folded
paper.*]

BESS

Don' gib' um dat stuff, Sportin' Life. He's ugly
drunk already.

CROWN

Yo' is a good one to talk! Pay um and shut up.
[*Takes the paper from SPORTING LIFE, unfolds it, and
inhales the powder.*]

BESS pays SPORTING LIFE. DADDY PETER takes his pipe
from his mouth and crowds in between CROWN and
SPORTING LIFE, putting a hand on the arm of
each.]

PETER

Frien' an' dice an' happy dus' ain't meant to 'soci-
ate. Yo' mens bes' go slow.

[CROWN draws back his fist. Cries of "Leabe Uncle

Peter be!" "He ain't mean no harm!" etc. CROWN relaxes. SPORTING LIFE picks up the dice.]

SPORTING LIFE

Huh, seben! Huh, seben! Huh, seben! [*Shoots.*] 'Leben! Come home, Fido! [*Whistles, snaps fingers, and pulls in pot.*]
[*All ante.*]

CROWN

Gawd damn it. I ain't read um yet.
[*All laugh at him. Cries of "Crown cock-eye drunk."*
"Can't tell dice from water-million," etc.]

CROWN

[*Growling*]: All right. I'm tellin' yo'.

SPORTING LIFE

[*Shooting*]: Six to make! Get um again! [*Shoots.*]
[*Cries of "Seben," "Crapped out," etc. PORGY takes up dice and commences to sway, with his eyes half closed. He apostrophizes dice in a sort of sing-song chant.*]

PORGY

Oh, little stars, roll me some light. [*Shoots.*] 'Leben little stars, come home [*Pulls in pot.*]
[*All ante.*]

Roll dis poor beggar a sun an' moon! [*Shoots.*]

MINGO

Snake eyes!

PORGY

Dem ain't no snake eyes. Dey is a flock ob mornin' an' ebenin' star. An' jus' yo' watch um rise for dis po' beggar. [*Shoots.*]

[*Cries of "Made um," "Dat's he point," etc. PORGY pulls in pot.*]

CROWN

Roll up dat nigger sleeve.

[*PORGY rolls up his sleeves.*]

Well, yo' gots dem damn dice conjer den.

[*All ante. PORGY rolls. Cries of "Snake eyes," "Crap-ped out!" All ante. ROBBINS takes up bones, whistles, shoots, snaps them back up very rapidly.*]

ROBBINS

Nine to make! [*Whistles, shoots, snaps fingers.*]
Read um! Nine spot! [*Sweeps them up, and reaches for money. CROWN seizes his wrist.*]

CROWN

Tech dat money an' meet yo' Gawd.

ROBBINS

Take yo' han' off me, yo' lousy houn'! [*Turns to JAKE.*] Han' me dat brick behin' yo'.

[JAKE reaches brickbat and puts it in his free hand.

CROWN jerks his cotton hook out of his belt and lunges forward, bowling ROBBINS over, and knocking brick from his hand. CROWN then steps back and kicks over lamp, extinguishing it.

The stage is now dark except for the small lamp at SERENA'S wash bench. This lights up the woman's terrified face as she strains her gaze into the darkness.

MARIA, CLARA and the others of her group stand behind her.

From the crap ring come cries and curses.

Suddenly, shutters are thrown open in right and left walls of building, and forms strain from the sills. As the shutters are banged open, shafts of light from them flash across the court, latticing it with a cross-play of light.

CROWN and ROBBINS are revealed facing each other: CROWN crouched for a spring with gleaming cotton hook extended; ROBBINS defenceless, his back to the wall.

Then ROBBINS lunges under the hook and they clinch. The fight proceeds with no distinguishable words from the combatants, but with bestial growls and breath that sobs and catches in their throats. In and out of the cross-play of light they sway—now revealed, now in darkness. The watchers move back and stand around the wall. They com-

mence a weird, high-keyed moaning that rises as the figures take the light, and subsides almost to silence when they are obscured.

Suddenly, out of the dark, CROWN swings ROBBINS into a shaft of light. CROWN is facing the audience and is holding ROBBINS by the throat at arms' length. With a triumphant snarl, he swings the hook downward.

ROBBINS drops back toward audience into darkness, and CROWN stands in high light.

There is dead silence now. In it CROWN looks down at his hands, opening and closing them. Then he draws his arm across his eyes.

The silence is shattered by a piercing scream, and SERENA runs across the court and throws herself on the body.

BESS appears in the light beside CROWN. She shakes him violently by the arm.]

BESS

Wake up an' hit it out. Yo' ain't got no time to lose.

CROWN

[Looking stupidly into the gloom at SERENA and the body of her man]: Whut de matter?

BESS

[Hysterically]: Yo' done kill Robbins, an' de police'll be comin'. *[She starts to pull him toward the gate.]*

PORGY

CROWN

Whar yo' goin' hide? Dey knows you an' me pulls togedder.

[In the half light, it can now be seen that the court has been deserted, except for SERENA, who sits beside the body with her head bowed, and sways from side to side with a low, steady moaning.]

A match is scratched and held in PORGY's hand. He is crouched on his doorstep. He looks toward ROB-BINS's body, and his face shows horror and fear. He gives a whimpering moan, and as the match burns out, he drags himself over his threshold and closes the door.]

BESS

Dey wouldn't look fuh me here. I'll stay here an' hide. Somebody always willin' to take care ob Bess.

CROWN

[Now at gate]: Well, git dis: he's temporary. I'se comin' back when de hell dies down.

BESS

All right. Only git out now. Here, take dis.

[Thrusts the money into his hand. She pushes him out of gate. He disappears into the shadows. She turns around and faces the court. It is silent and empty except for the body and SERENA. SPORT-

ING LIFE *steps out of the shadows under SERENA'S steps, startling her.*]

Dat yo', Sportin' Life? Fo' Gawd's sake, gib' me a little touch happy dus'. I shakin' so I can hardly stan'. [*Suddenly remembering*]: Oh, I done gib' all de money to Crown. I can't pay fo' um. But, for Gawd' sake, gib me jus' a touch!

SPORTING LIFE

Yo' ain't needs to pay fo' um, Bess. [*Pours powder into her hand.*] Sportin' Life ain't go back on a frien' in trouble like dese odder low-life nigger'.

[*Bess quickly inhales the 'powder. Sighs with relief.*]

Listen! I'll be goin' back up to Noo Yo'k soon. All yo' gots to do is to come wid me now. I'll hide yo' out an' take yo' on wid me when I go. Why, yo' an' me'll be a swell team! Wid yo' looks an' all de frien' I gots dere, it'll be ebery night an' all night—licker, dus', bright lights, an' de sky de limit! [*He looks apprehensively toward gate. Takes her arm.*] Come 'long! We gots to beat it while de beatin's good.

[*Bess draws away sharply from his grasp.*]

Nobody 'round here's goin' to take in Crown's Bess. Yo' bes' go wid yo' only frien'.

BESS

I ain't come to dat yet.

SPORTING LIFE

Well, de cops ain't goin' find me here fo' no 'oman!
[*Slinks out gate.*]

[*BESS looks desperately about for shelter. She advances timidly and takes up lamp from the wash bench. She starts at rear left, and tries all of the doors as she goes. They are either locked, or slammed in her face as she reaches out to them. She comes to MARIA's shop door, and as she reaches it, it is jerked open and MARIA confronts her.*]

MARIA

[*In a tense voice*]: Yo' done bring trouble 'nough.
Git out 'fore de police comes.

BESS

Yo' wouldn't hab' a heart, an' let me in?

MARIA

Not till hell freeze!

[*A light is lit in PORGY's room, showing at window and crack in door.*]

BESS

[*Indicating PORGY's room*]: Who lib ober dere?

MARIA

He ain't no use to yo' kin'. Dat's Porgy. He a cripple an' a beggar.

[*BESS seems to agree with MARIA that PORGY is of no use to her. Crosses to gate, hesitates. Then she turns slowly toward PORGY's room and crosses, shuddering away from SERENA and the body, which she must pass on the way. She reaches the door, puts her hand on the knob, hesitates, then slowly she opens it, enters, and closes it behind her.*]

CURTAIN

Scene Two

St. Michael's chimes the quarters and strikes seven.

The curtain rises on SERENA's room, a second story room in Catfish Row, which still bears traces of its ancient beauty in its high panelled walls and tall, slender mantel with Grecian frieze and intricate scroll work. The door is in left wall at back. Near the centre of back wall a window looks toward the sea. The fireplace is in right wall. Over the mantel is a gaudy lithograph of Lincoln striking chains from the slaves.

The room is vaguely lighted by several kerosene lamps, and is scantily furnished: a bed against the back wall at left, and a few chairs.

ROBBINS's body lies upon the bed, completely covered by a white sheet. On its chest is a large blue saucer. Standing about the bed or seated on the floor are

Negroes, all singing and swaying and patting with their large feet.

SERENA sits at the foot of the bed swaying dismally to the rhythm.

They have been singing for hours. The monotony of the dirge and the steady beat of the patting has lulled several into a state of coma.

“Deat’, ain’t yuh gots no shame, shame?
Deat’, ain’t yuh gots no shame, shame?
Deat’, ain’t yuh gots no shame, shame?
Deat’, ain’t yuh gots no shame?”

“Teck dis man an’ gone, gone,
Teck dis man an’ gone, gone,
Teck dis man an’ gone, gone,
Deat’, ain’t yuh gots no shame?”

“Leabe dis’ ’oman lone, lone,
Leabe dis’ ’oman lone, lone,
Leabe dis’ ’oman lone, lone,
Deat’, ain’t yuh gots no shame?”

[The door opens and PETER comes in. Doffs his old hat, crosses, and puts coins in saucer. The singing and swaying continue. He finds a seat at right front and begins to sway and pat with the others. SERENA reaches over, gets saucer, and counts coins. Replaces saucer with a hopeless expression.]

JAKE

How de saucer stan', Sistuh?

[*The singing dies gradually as, one by one, the Negroes stop to listen, but the rhythm continues.*]

SERENA

[*Dully*]: Fourteen dolluh and thirty-six cent.

MARIA

[*Encouragingly*]: Dat's a-comin' on Sistuh. Yo' can bury him soon.

SERENA

De Boa'd ob Healt' say he gots to git buried to-morruh.

CLARA

It cost thirty-four dollah for bury my grandmudder, but she gots de three carriage'.

SERENA

What I goin' to do ef I ain't gots de money?

PETER

[*Understanding that they refer to saucer*]: Gawd gots plenty coin' fo' de saucer.

SERENA

Bless de Lo'd.

PORGY

PETER

An' He goin' soften dese nigger heart' fo' fill de saucer till he spill ober.

SERENA

Amen, my Jedus!

PETER

De Lord will provide a grabe fo' He chillun.

CLARA

Bless de Lo'd!

[*The swaying gradually changes to the rhythm of PETER'S prayer.*]

PETER

An' he gots comfort fo' de widder.

SERENA

Oh, my Jedus!

PETER

An' food fo' de fadderless.

SERENA

Yes, Lo'd!

PETER

An' he goin' raise dis poor nigger out de grabe.

JAKE

Allelujah!

PETER

An' set him in de seat ob de righteous, Amen.

SERENA

Amen, my brudder.

[*They all sway in silence.*]

ANNIE

[*Looking toward door*]: What dat?

CLARA

I hear somebody comin' up de steps now bringing much penny fo' de saucer.

[*MARIA opens the door and looks out.*]

SERENA

Who dat?

MARIA

It's Porgy comin' up de steps.

JAKE

[*Starting to rise*]: Somebody bes' go help um.

MARIA

He gots help. Crown's Bess is a-helpin' um.

SERENA

[*Springing to her feet*]: What's she a-comin' here fo'?

[*They are all silent, looking toward door. PORGY and BESS enter. PORGY looks about; makes a movement toward corpse. BESS starts to lead him across room. SERENA stands defiant, silent, till they have gone half the way.*]

What yo' bring dat 'oman here fo'?

PORGY

She want to come help sing. She's a good shouter.

[*BESS, self-possessed, leads PORGY on toward saucer. He deposits his coins. Then BESS stretches her hand toward saucer.*]

SERENA

I don' need yo' money fo' bury my man.

[*BESS hesitates.*]

I ain't takin' money off he murderer.

PORGY

Dat ain't Crown's money. I gib um to Bess fo' put in de saucer.

SERENA

All right. Yo' can put um in.

[*BESS drops the money in saucer and leads PORGY to*

a place at left front. They sit side by side on the floor. SERENA stands glaring after them.]

PETER

[*Trying to make peace*]: Sing, Sistuh, sing! Time is passin', an' de saucer ain't full.

SERENA

[*To PORGY*]: She can sit ober dere in de corner, ef she want to. But she can't sing!

[*BESS sits with quiet dignity; seeming scarcely to notice SERENA's tone and words.*]

PORGY

Dat all right. Bess don' want fo' sing, anyway.
[*The spiritual begins again.*]

“Leabe dese chillun starve, starve,
Leabe dese chillun starve, starve,
Leabe dese chillun starve, starve,
Deat', ain't yuh gots no shame?”

MINGO

[*Looking upward*]: Dat rain on de roof?

JAKE

Yes, rainin' hard out.

PORGY

PORGY

Dat's all right now fo' Robbins. Gawd done send He rain already fo' wash he footsteps offen dis eart'.

LILY

Oh, yes, Brudder!

SERENA

Amen, my Jedus!

[The spiritual continues. The swaying and patting begin gradually and grow. Slowly BESS begins to sway with the others, but she makes no sound.

The door is burst suddenly open and the DETECTIVE enters. Two POLICEMEN wait in the doorway.

The spiritual ceases abruptly. All the Negroes' eyes are riveted on the white man and filled with fear. He strides over to the corpse, looks down at it.]

DETECTIVE

Um! A saucer-buried nigger, I see! [*To SERENA*]: You're his widow?

SERENA

Yes, suh.

DETECTIVE

He didn't leave any burial insurance?

SERENA

No, boss. He didn't leabe nuttin'.

DETECTIVE

Well, see to it that he's buried to-morrow. [*Turns away from her. Slowly circles room, looking fixedly at each Negro in turn. Each quails under his gaze. He pauses abruptly before PETER. Suddenly shouts at him*]: You killed Robbins, and I'm going to hang you for it!

[*PETER is almost paralyzed by terror, his panic heightened by the fact that he cannot hear what the DETECTIVE says. His mouth opens and he cannot find his voice.*]

LILY

[*To DETECTIVE*]: He ain't done um.

PETER

[*Helplessly*]: What he say?

LILY

[*Shouting in PETER's ear*]: He say yo' kill Robbins.

DETECTIVE

[*Laying his hand on PETER's shoulder*]: Come along now!

PETER

'Fore Gawd, boss, I ain't neber done um!

[*The DETECTIVE whips out his revolver and points it between PETER's eyes.*]

DETECTIVE

Who did it, then? [*Shouting.*] You heard me! Who did it?

PETER

[*Wildly*]: Crown done um, boss. I done see him do um.

DETECTIVE

[*Shouting*]: You're sure you saw him?

PETER

I swear to Gawd, boss. I was right dere, close beside um.

DETECTIVE

[*With satisfied grunt*]: Umph! I thought as much. [*Swings suddenly on PORGY and points the pistol in his face.*] You saw it, too!

[*PORGY trembles but does not speak. He lowers his eyes.*]

Come! Out with it! I don't want to have to put the law on you!

[*PORGY sits silent. The DETECTIVE shouts with fury.*]

Look at me, you damned nigger!

[*PORGY slowly raises his eyes to the DETECTIVE's face.*]

PORGY

I ain't know nuttin' 'bout um, boss.

DETECTIVE

[*Angrily*]: That's your room in the corner, isn't it?
[*Points downward toward left.*]

PORGY

Yes, boss. Dat's my room.

DETECTIVE

The door opens on the court, don't it?

PORGY

Yes, boss, my door open on de cou't.

DETECTIVE

And yet you didn't see or hear anything?

PORGY

I ain't know nuttin' 'bout um. I been inside asleep on my bed wid de door closed.

DETECTIVE

[*Exasperated*]: You're a damned liar. [*Turns away disgusted. Saunters toward door. To POLICEMEN, in-*

dicating PETER]: He saw the killing. Take him along and lock him up as a material witness.

[FIRST POLICEMAN *crosses to* PETER.]

FIRST POLICEMAN

[*Helping* PETER *to his feet*]: Come along, Uncle.

PETER

[*Shaking with terror*]: I ain't neber done um, boss.

POLICEMAN

Nobody says you did it. We're just taking you along as a witness.

[*But* PETER *does not understand.*]

SERENA

What yo' goin' to do wid um?

POLICEMAN

Lock him up. Come along. It ain't going to be so bad for you as for Crown, anyway.

SECOND POLICEMAN

[*To* DETECTIVE]: How about the cripple?

DETECTIVE

[*Sourly*]: He couldn't have helped seeing it, but I can't make him come through. But it don't matter.

One's enough to hang Crown [*with a short laugh*]*—if we ever get him.*

MARIA

[*To* FIRST POLICEMAN]: How long yo' goin' lock um up fo'?

FIRST POLICEMAN

Till we catch Crown.

PORGY

[*Sadly*]: I reckon Crown done loose now in de palmetto thickets, an' de rope ain't neber made fo' hang um.

DETECTIVE

Then the old man's out of luck. [*To* SERENA]: Remember! You've got to bury that nigger to-morrow or the Board of Health will take him and turn him over to the medical students.

PETER

I ain't neber done um, boss.

DETECTIVE

[*To* FIRST POLICEMAN]: Come on! Get the old man in the wagon.

[*PETER, shaking in every limb, is led out. The DETECTIVE and SECOND POLICEMAN follow. A moment of desolated silence.*]

PORGY

MARIA

It sho' pay nigger to go blin' in dis world.

JAKE

Porgy ain't got much leg, but he sho' got sense in dealing wid de w'ite folks.

PORGY

[*Slowly, as though half to himself*]: I can't puzzle dis t'ing out. Peter war a good man. An' dat nigger Crown war a killer an' fo'eber gettin' into trouble. But dere go Peter fo' be lock up like t'ief, an' here lie Robbins wid he wife an' fadderless chillun. An Crown done gone he was fo' do de same t'ing ober again somewheres else.

[*The Negroes begin to sway and moan.*]

CLARA

Gone fo' true! Yes, Jedus!

[*A voice raises the spiritual, "What de Matter, Chillun?" It swells slowly. One voice joins in after another. The swaying and patting begin and grow slowly in tempo and emphasis. As before, BESS sways in silence.*]

"What' de mattuh, chillun?

What' de mattuh, chillun?

What' de mattuh, chillun?

Yuh can't stan' still.
 Pain gots de body.
 Pain gots de body.
 Pain gots de body.
 An' I can't stan' still.

"What de mattuh, Sistuh?
 What de mattuh, Sistuh?
 What de mattuh, Sistuh?
 Yuh can't stan' still.
 Jedus gots our brudder,
 Jedus gots our brudder,
 Jedus gots our brudder,
 An' I can't stan' still."

[*The door opens and the UNDERTAKER bustles into the room with an air of great importance. He is a short, yellow Negro with a low, oily voice. He is dressed entirely in black. He crosses to SERENA. The song dies away, but the swaying continues to its rhythm.*]

UNDERTAKER

How de saucer stan' now, my sistuh? [*Glances appraisingly at saucer.*]

SERENA

[*In a flat, despairing voice*]: Dere ain't but fifteen dollah.

UNDERTAKER

Umph! Can't bury um fo' fifteen dollah.

JAKE

He gots to git buried tomorruh or de Boa'd ob Healt' 'll take um an' gib um to de students.

SERENA

[*Wildly*]: Oh, fo' Gawd's sake bury um in de grave-yahd. [*She rises to her knees and seizes the UNDERTAKER's hand in both hers. Imploringly*]: Don' let de students hab um. I goin' to work Monday, an' I swear to Gawd I goin' to pay yo' ebery cent.

[*Even the swaying ceases now. The Negroes all wait tensely, their eyes riveted on the UNDERTAKER's face, pleading silently. After a moment's hesitation, the UNDERTAKER's professional manner slips from him.*]

UNDERTAKER

[*Simply*]: All right, Sistuh. Wid de box an' one carriage, it'll cost me more'n twenty-five. But I'll see yo' t'rough.

[*An expression of vast relief sweeps into every face. SERENA silently relaxes across the foot of the bed, her head between her outstretched arms.*]

Yo' can all be ready at eight tomorruh. It's a long trip to de cemetery.

[The UNDERTAKER goes out door. The Negroes gaze silently after him with eyes filled with gratitude. There is a moment of silence after his departure. Then, carried out of herself by sympathy and gratitude, BESS, forgetful of the ban laid upon her, lifts her strong, beautiful voice triumphantly.]

BESS

“Oh, I gots a little brudder in de new grabeyahd
What outshine de sun,
Outshine de sun,”

[POEGY's voice joins hers]:

“Outshine de sun.”

[By the fourth line, many of the Negro voices have joined in, and the song grows steadily in volume and fervour.]

“Oh, I gots a little brudder in de new grabeyahd
What outshine de sun,
An' I'll meet um in de Primus Lan'.”

[BESS's voice is heard again for one brief moment alone as it rises high and clear on the first line of the chorus]:

“I will meet um in de Primus Lan'!”

[*Then a full chorus, with deep basses predominating, crashes in on the second line of the refrain. SERENA, last of all, joins enthusiastically in the chorus.*]

"Oh, I'll meet um in de Primus Lan'!

I will meet um, meet um, meet um,

I will meet um, meet um, meet um,

I will meet um in de Primus Lan'!

"Oh, I gots a mansion up on high

What ain't make wid' han',

Ain't make wid han',

Ain't make wid han',

Oh, I gots a mansion up on high

What ain't make wid' han',

An' I'll meet um in de Primus Lan'!"

[*The beautiful old spiritual beats triumphantly through the narrow room, steadily gaining in speed.*

SERENA is the first to leap to her feet and begin to "shout."^{**} One by one, as the spirit moves them, the Negroes follow her example till they are all on their feet, swaying, shuffling, clapping their hands.

"Shouting" is the term given by the Carolina Negroes to the body rhythms and steps with which they accompany their emotional songs.

BESS leads the "shouting" as she has the singing, throwing her whole soul into an intricate shuffle and complete turn. Each Negro "shouts" in his own individual way, some dancing in place, others merely swaying and patting their hands.

"Allelujahs" and cries of "Yes, Lord" are interjected into the singing. And the rhythm swells till the old walls seem to rock and surge with the sweep of it.]

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

ACT TWO

Scene One

St. Michael's chimes the quarters and strikes one. Morning.

The court is full of movement, the Negroes going about their tasks. At right front, a group of fishermen are rigging their lines. They are working leisurely with much noisy laughter and banter. Occasionally, a snatch of song is heard.

PORGY is sitting at his window. The soap-box car stands by his door, the goat is inside the room. Occasionally looks out door.

JAKE

Fish runnin' well outside de bar dese days.

MINGO

[*An onlooker*]: Hear tell de Bufort mens bring in such a catch yesterday dat de boat look like he gots floor ob silber.

JIM

I hears dey gots to t'row away half de catch so as not glut de market.

PORGY

JAKE

Yes, suh! Fish runnin' well, an' we mens bes' make de mores ob it.

JIM

Dats de trut'. Dem Septembuh storm due soon, an' fish don' like eas' win' an' muddy watuh.

ANNIE

[*Calling across court*]: Mus' be you mens forget 'bout picnic. Ain't yo' know de parade start up de block at ten o'clock?

MINGO

Dat's de trut', Sistuh.
[*The men begin to gather up their fishing gear.*]

PORGY

[*At window. Solicitously*]: Bess, ain't you wants to go to de picnic after all? Yo' know I is membuh in good standin' ob "De Sons and Daughters ob Repent Ye Saith de Lord."

BESS

[*Unseen within room*]: I radder stay home wid yo'.

PORGY

Yo' gots jus' as much right to go as any 'oman in Catfish Row.

BESS

[*In unconvincing voice*]: I ain't care much 'bout picnic.

[*PORGY is troubled. Sits in silence.*]

SPORTING LIFE

[*Who has sauntered over to group of fishermen*]: All yo' mens goin' to de picnic?

JAKE

Goin' fo' sho'. How come yo' t'ink we ain't goin'?

SPORTING LIFE

I jus' ask. Don' hab no picnic in Noo Yo'k. Yo' folks still hab yo' picnic on Kittiwah Islan'?

JIM

Listen to Sporting Life. He been six mont' in Noo Yo'k, an 'he want to know ef we still hab we picnic on Kittiwah! [*They laugh.*]

[*SPORTING LIFE moves off. Sits at MARIA's table. LILY joins the group of men.*]

JAKE

All right, mens. I'm all fuh ridin' luck fur as he will tote me. Turn out at four tomorruh mornin', an' we'll push de *Sea Gull* clean to de Blackfish Banks 'fore we wets de anchor. I gots a feelin' we goin' be gunnels under wid de pure fish when we comes in at night.

PORGY

LILY

Yuh goin' fuh take de *Sea Gull* out beyond bah?
[*She laughs. Calls out to NELSON, who is on far side of court*]: Heah dis, Nelson. Dese mens aimin' fuh take de *Sea Gull* to de Blackfish Banks!

[*NELSON joins the group. CLARA, overhearing, slowly approaches, her baby in her arms. LILY turns to the others.*]

Yo' mens bes' keep yo' ole washtub close to home. Wait till yo' gets a good boat like de *Mosquito* 'fore yo' trabble.

[*All the men and LILY laugh delightedly.*]

JAKE

Mosquito born in de water, but he can drown jus' de same.

[*All laugh, LILY slapping NELSON's shoulder in her appreciation.*]

CLARA has stood silently beside them with anxious eyes.]

CLARA

Jake! Yo' ain't plannin' to take de *Sea Gull* to de Blackfish Bank? It's time fuh de Septembuh storms.

JAKE

[*Laughing reassuringly*]: Ain't yo' know we had one stiff gale las' yeah, an' he nebber come two yeah han' runnin'.

CLARA

Jake, I don' want yo' fuh go outside de bah!

JAKE

How yo' t'ink we goin' gib dat man child college edication?

[*They all laugh, except CLARA.*]

CLARA

Deys odder way fuh make money 'sides fish.

JAKE

Hear de 'oman! Mebbe yo' like me to be a cotton nigger! Huh?

[*The men laugh.*]

SCIPIO is playing about the court with a broad red sash pinned across his breast from shoulder to waist. It bears the legend, "Repent Ye Saith the Lord." From the boy's breast flutters a yellow ribbon with the word "Marshal." He struts about court leading an imaginary parade. JAKE, looking about for change of subject, sees SCIPIO and starts to his feet.]

Heah, Scipio! Who sash dat yo' gots?

[*SCIPIO backs away. JAKE pursues.*]

Come heah, yo'! Jus' as I t'ought. Dat's my sash!

[*Not watching where he is going, SCIPIO, in his flight from JAKE, runs straight into MARIA, who delivers him to JAKE.*]

PORGY

MARIA

Heah yo' is, Jake.

JAKE

T'ank yo' kindly Sistuh. [*To* SCIPIO, *while he rescues his sash and badge*]: How yo' t'ink I goin' lead dis picnic parade atter yo' been ruin my sash? [*Pins ribbons on his own breast. Sits on washing bench. Lights pipe.*]

[*The crowd begins to break up with noisy laughter and joking.*]

SERENA *comes in at gate, wearing a neat white apron and a hat. Crosses to PORGY's door, greeting her friends as she passes them.*]

SERENA

[*To the men*]: Fine day fuh de picnic.

JIM

Fine fuh true, Sistuh.

[SERENA *knocks at PORGY's door. BESS opens it. SERENA pays no attention to her.*]

SERENA

[*Looking through BESS*]: Porgy! [*Sees him at window. Crosses to him.*] Oh, dere yo' is. I gots news. I done been to see my white folks 'bout Peter.

PORGY

What dey say?

SERENA

Dey say dey gots a white gentleman frien', name ob Mistah Archdale, who is lawyer an' he can get um out. I tells um yo' is de pusson fo' um to talk to 'cause yo' gots so much sense when yo' talks to w'ite folks. An' dey say he'll come fo' see yo' 'cause he pass right by here ebery day, an' yo' is cripple. [*Turns away, ignoring BESS. Crosses, sits beside JAKE, takes out and lights her pipe.*]

[*MARIA is serving a late breakfast to SPORTING LIFE.*

JIM and MINGO have joined him at table. St. Michael's chimes the quarter hour. MARIA crosses to pump to fill kettle. After a few puffs, SERENA whispers loudly to JAKE]:

It's a shame when good Christian 'omans gots to lib under de same roof wid a murderin' she-debil like dat Crown's Bess.

JAKE

She don' seem to harm nobody, an' Porgy seem to like to hab she 'roun'.

MARIA

Porgy change since dat 'oman go to lib' wid he.

SERENA

How he change?

MARIA

I tell yo' dat nigger happy now.

PORGY

SERENA

Go 'long wid yo'. Dat 'oman ain't de kin' fo' make cripple happy. It take a killer like Crown to hol' she down.

MARIA

Dat may be so, but Porgy don't know dat yet. An', 'sides, ef a man is de kin' what need a 'oman, he goin' be happy regahdless.

JAKE

Dat's de trut', Sistuh. Him dress she up in he own eye, till she stan' like de Queen ob Sheba to he.

MARIA

Porgy t'ink right now dat he gots a she-gawd in he room.

SERENA

Well, dere is gawds and gawds, an' Porgy sho' got de kin' what goin' gib um hell. Much as I likes Porgy, I wouldn't swap a word wid she.

MARIA

Dat all so, Sistuh. But yo' keep yo' eye on Porgy. He use to hate all dese chillen, but now he nebber come home widout candy ball fuh de crowd.

JAKE

I tells yo' dat 'oman——
[BESS crosses to pump with bucket.]

SERENA

Sh!

[*The three are silent watching BESS. She is neatly dressed, walks with queenly dignity, passes them as though they did not exist, fills her bucket, swings it easily to her head, turns from them with an air of cool scorn, and recrosses to her own door. The three look after her with varying expressions: MARIA interested, SERENA indignant, JAKE admiring.*]

JAKE

Dat's de t'ing. She sho' ain't askin' no visit ofen none ob she neighbours.

SERENA

Yo' poor sof'-headed nigger! Ain't yo' shame to set dere 'fore me an' talk sweet-mout' 'bout dat murderin' Crown's Bess? [*Making eyes at him*]: Now, ef I was a man, I'd sabe my sof' wo'd fuh de God-fearin' 'omans.

JAKE

Ef yo' was a man—— [*Pauses, looking thoughtfully at her, then shakes his head.*] No, it ain't no use. Yo' wouldn't understan'. Dat's somethin' shemale sense ain't goin' help yo' none wid. [*Knocks ashes from his pipe.*]

[*MARIA has turned toward her table. She suddenly puts down her kettle, strides to the table, seizes SPORTING LIFE's hand, opens the fingers before he has time to resist, and blows a white powder from his palm.*]

SPORTING LIFE

[*Furiously*]: What yo' t'ink yo' doin'! Dat stuff cos' money.

[*MARIA stands back, arms akimbo, staring down at him for a moment in silence. SPORTING LIFE shifts uneasily in his chair.*]

MARIA

[*In stentorian tones*]: Nigger! I jus' tryin' to figger out wedder I better kill yuh decent now, wid yo' frien' about yo'—or leabe yo' fuh de white folks to hang atter a while. I ain't say nuttin' no matter how drunk yo' gets dese boys on yo' rot-gut whisky. But nobody ain't goin' peddle happy dus' roun' my shop. Yo' heah what I say?

SPORTING LIFE

Come now, ole lady, don't talk like dese ole-fashioned, lamp-oil niggers. Why, up in Noo Yo'k, where I been waitin' in a—hotel——

MARIA

Hotel, eh? I suppose dese gal' yo' tryin' to get to go back to Noo Yo'k wid yo' is goin' to be bordahs!

MARIA

[*Shouting*]: Don' yo' try any ob yo' Noo Yo'kin' roun' dis town. Ef I had my way, I'd go down to dat Noo Yo'k boat an' take ebery Gawd's nigger what come up de gangplank wid a Joseph coat on he back an' a glass headlight on he buzzum an' drap um to de catfish 'fore he foot hit decent groun'. Yes! my belly fair ache wid dis Noo Yo'k talk.

[*Bangs table so violently with her fist that SPORTING LIFE leaps from his chair and extends a propitiating hand toward her.*]

SPORTING LIFE

Dat's all right, Auntie. Le's you an' me be frien'.

MARIA

Frien' wid yo'! One ob dese day I might lie down wid rattlesnake, an' when dat time come, yo' kin come right 'long an' git in de bed. But till den, keep yo' shiny carcass in Noo Yo'k til de debble ready to take cha'ge ob um.

[*SIMON FRAZIER, an elderly Negro dressed in black frock coat, comes in at the gate, looks about, crosses to MARIA's table. MARIA is still glaring at SPORTING LIFE so ferociously that FRAZIER hesitates. MARIA looks up and sees him. She is suddenly all smiles.*]

PORGY

MARIA

Mornin', lawyer. Lookin' fuh somebody?

FRAZIER

Porgy live here, don't he?

MARIA

Sho' he do. Right ober dere he room.

FRAZIER

T'ank yo', Sistuh. [*Crosses toward PORGY's door.*]

LILY

[*Who is near PORGY's door*]: Porgy! Lawyer Frazier to see yo'.

[*MARIA gives SPORTING LIFE final glare and enters shop. BESS helps PORGY on to doorstep and returns to room.*]

FRAZIER

Mornin', Porgy.

PORGY

Mornin', lawyer.

FRAZIER

I come to see yo' on business fo' one ob my w'ite client'.

PORGY

Huh?

FRAZIER

I been in to see Mistah Alan Archdale yesterday an' he gib' me message fo' yo'.

PORGY

Who he?

FRAZIER

[*In disgust*]: Who he? Yo' ain't know who is Mistah Alan Archdale? He lawyer, same as me.

PORGY

[*Uneasily*]: Whut he wants wid me?

FRAZIER

I been in to see um on private business like we lawyers always has togedder. An' he say to me, "Mistah Frazier, do yo' know dat black scoundrel dat hitches his goat outside my window ebery mornin'?" I sez: "Yes, Misteh Archdale, I knows um." An' he say: "Well, when yo' goes out, tell um to mobe on." When I comes out, yo' is gone, so I come heah fo' tell yo'. *Mobe on.*

PORGY

Why he don't tell me heself?

FRAZIER

Yo' t'ink Misteh Alan Archdale gots time fo' tell nigger to mobe on? No, suh! He put de case in my

han', an' I is authorize fo' tell yo' yo' gots to fin' nudder hitchin' place.

PORGY

[*Unhappily*]: I been hitch on dat corner mos' a mont' now. Why he don't want me 'roun'?

FRAZIER

[*Scratching his head*]: I ain't quite make dat out. He say sompen 'bout de goat an' de commodity advertise on de chariot. [*Pointing to cart*]: "Pure an' fragrant." Dat's soap, ain't it? I gather dat he t'ink yo' goat need soap.

PORGY

[*Astonished*]: Whut a goat want wid soap?

FRAZIER

[*Also puzzled*]: I ain't know ezac'ly.
[*BESS comes to doorway and stands behind PORGY.*
FRAZIER resumes his authoritative tone.]

All I knows is yuh gots to mobe on!

[FRAZIER looks up and sees BESS]: How yo' do?
[*Looks at her, scrutinizing.*] Ain't yo' Crown's Bess?

PORGY

No, suh, she ain't. She's Porgy's Bess.

FRAZIER

[*Sensing business*]: Oh! I guess den yo' goin' be wantin' divorce.

PORGY

Huh?

FRAZIER

Ef de 'oman goin' stay wid' yo', she gots to hab divorce from Crown or else it ain't legal.

[*Takes legal-looking document from pocket. Shows it to PORGY. PORGY looks at it, much impressed. Passes it to BESS.*]

PORGY

How much it cos'?

FRAZIER

One dollah, ef dere ain't no complications.

[*PORGY looks dubious. FRAZIER quickly takes huge seal from his coat-tail pocket. Shows it to PORGY.*]

FRAZIER

When yo' gits divorce, I puts dis seal on de paper to show you has paid cash.

PORGY

Bess, yo' likes to hab divorce?

PORGY

BESS

[*With longing*]: Whut yo' t'ink, Porgy?

[*The other Negroes are gradually edging nearer to listen.*]

PORGY

I goin' buy yo' divorce. Bring me my pocketbook.

[*BESS goes into room and returns immediately with a number of small coins tied up in a rag, hands it to PORGY. He laboriously counts out a dollar in nickels and pennies. In the meantime, FRAZIER is filling in document with fountain pen. Group of Negroes now listening frankly. FRAZIER takes coins from PORGY. Counts them. BESS holds out her hand for document.*]

FRAZIER

[*Pocketing coins*]: Wait a minute. 'Tain't legal yet.

[*Holding paper in hands, lowers glasses on his nose. Begins in solemn tones*]: Yo' name?

BESS

Bess.

[*FRAZIER makes note.*]

FRAZIER

Yo' age?

BESS

Twenty-six yeah.

FRAZIER

Yo' desire to be divorce from dis man Crown?

BESS

Yas, boss.

FRAZIER

Address de co't as Yo' Honour.

BESS

Yas, Yo' Honour.

FRAZIER

When was yo' an' Crown marry?

[BESS *hesitates.*]

BESS

I don' rightly 'member, boss—Yo' Honour.

FRAZIER

One yeah? Ten yeah?

BESS

Ain't I done tell yo' I don' remember?

LILY

Shé ain't neber been marry.

FRAZIER

[To BESS]: Dat de trut'?

PORGY

BESS

Yas, Yo' Honour.

FRAZIER

[*Triumphantly*]: Ah, dat's a complication.

BESS

I ain't know dat mattered.

PORGY

Yo' can't gib she divorce? Gib me back my dollah.

FRAZIER

Who say I can't gib she divorce? But, under circumstances, dis divorce cos' two dollah. It take expert fuh divorce 'oman whut ain't marry.

BESS

Don't yuh pay um no two dollah, Porgy. It ain't wuth it.

FRAZIER

Berry well, den, ef yo' wants to go on libbin' in sin. [*Takes coins from pocket and begins to count. Seeing that they do not weaken, he pauses abruptly in his counting.*] Seein' that we is ole frien', I goin' make dis divo'ce dollah an' er half.

[*Again takes out impressive seal. PORGY eyes seal, greatly impressed. Begins counting out more pennies. FRAZIER affixes seal. Hands it to PORGY. Pockets extra money.*]

FRAZIER

Dat ain't much money considerin' whut yo' gets. One dollah an er half to change from a 'oman to a lady.

BESS

[*Happily*]: T'ank yo' kindly, Yo' Honour.

FRAZIER

Glad to serbe yo'. When yo' ready to buy license, come to me.

PORGY

Whut she want wid license? She gots divorce, ain't she?

FRAZIER

Well, yo' ought to be stylish like de white folks, an' follow up divorce wid marriage license.

[*PORGY and BESS look quite depressed at prospect of further complications.*]

Well, good-mornin', Missus Porgy. [*Turns to go. To MARIA*]: Yo' gots de cup coffee fo' sweeten my mout'?

MARIA

Sho' I is. Step right ober.

[*She and FRAZIER enter cookshop.*]

The court is alive with noisy laughter and action. A fish vendor is calling his wares. St. Michael's is chiming the half hour. MARIA is bustling back

and forth serving the men at her table. SERENA is pumping water and calling to her friends. ANNIE is holding CLARA's baby, rocking and tossing it. CLARA is rearranging sash with motto "Repent Ye Saith the Lord" across JAKE's breast, and consulting the others as to the proper angle. The sash adjusted, JAKE bursts into song. "Brer Rabbit, whut yo' da do dey!" LILY answers with second line of song. The duet continues.

SCIPIO runs in at gate. Runs to SERENA.]

SCIPIO

Dey's a buckra comin'. I heah um axin' outside ef dis Catfish Row.

[The Negroes suddenly break off in their tasks. JAKE ceases to sing.]

NELSON

[Calling to SERENA]: Whut he say?

SERENA

[In guarded voice, but addressing the court in general]: W'ite gen'man.

[There is a sudden deep silence, contrasting strangely with noise and movement that preceded it. ANNIE gives CLARA her baby, goes quickly inside her own door. JAKE removes sash, puts it in pocket. SERENA retreats behind her tubs. The men at table give absorbed attention to their food. MARIA

serves them in silence without looking up. SCIPIO beccomes engrossed in tinkering with an old barrel hoop. BESS goes inside. PORGY feigns sleep.

ALAN ARCHDALE, *a tall, kindly man in early middle age, whose bearing at once stamps him the aristocrat, enters the court, looks about at the Negroes, all ostensibly oblivious of his presence.]*

ARCHDALE

[*Calling to SCIPIO*]: Boy!

[*SCIPIO approaches, reluctant, shuffling.*]

I'm looking for a man by the name of Porgy. Which is his room?

[*SCIPIO shuffles and is silent.*]

Don't you know Porgy?

SCIPIO

[*His eyes on the ground*]: No, suh.

ARCHDALE

He lives here, doesn't he?

SCIPIO

I ain't know, boss.

[*CLARA is nearest. ARCHDALE crosses to her. She listens submissively, her eyes lowered.*]

ARCHDALE

I'm looking for a man named Porgy. Can you direct me to his room?

PORGY

CLARA

[*Polite, but utterly negative*]: Porgy? [*Repeats the name slowly as though trying to remember.*] No, boss, I ain't nebber heah ob nobody 'roun' dese parts name Porgy.

ARCHDALE

Come, you must know him. I am sure he lives in Catfish Row.

CLARA

[*Raising her voice*]: Anybody heah know a man by de name Porgy?

[*Several of the Negroes repeat the name to one another, with shakes of their heads.*]

ARCHDALE

[*Laughing reassuringly*]: I'm a friend of his, Mr. Alan Archdale, and I want to help him.

[*SERENA approaches. Looks keenly at ARCHDALE.*]

SERENA

Go 'long an' wake Porgy. Can't yo' tell folks when yo' see um?

[*A light of understanding breaks over CLARA's face.*]

CLARA

Oh, yo' means *Porgy*! I ain't understan' whut name yo' say, boss.

[VOICES *all about the court*: "Oh, *de gen'man mean Porgy. How come we ain't onderstan'!*"

CLARA *crosses to Porgy's door, all smiles.*]

A gen'man come fuh see Porgy.

[PORGY *appears to awake. ARCHDALE crosses to him.*]

PORGY

How yo' does, boss?

ARCHDALE

You're Porgy? Oh, you're the fellow who rides in the goat cart. [*Sits on step.*]

PORGY

Yes, boss, I gots goat.

ARCHDALE

Tell me about your friend who got locked up on account of the Robbins murder.

PORGY

[*His face inscrutable*]: How come yo' to care, boss?

ARCHDALE

Why, I'm the Rutledge's lawyer, and I look after their coloured folks for them. Serena Robbins is the daughter of their old coachman, and she asked them to help out her friend.

PORGY

PORGY

[*A shade of suspicion still in his voice*]: Peter ain't got no money, yo' know, boss; an' I jus' begs from do' to do'!

ARCHDALE

[*Reassuringly*]: It will not take any money. At least, not much. And I am sure that Mrs. Rutledge will take care of that. So you can go right ahead and tell me all about it.

[*PORGY's suspicions vanish.*]

PORGY

It like dis, boss. Crown kill Robbins, an' Peter see um do it. Now Crown gone he ways, an' dey done gots ole Peter lock up.

ARCHDALE

I see, as a witness.

PORGY

Till dey catch Crown, dey say, but ef dey keep um lock up till den, dat ole man gots er life sentence.

ARCHDALE

[*Under his breath*]: The dirty hounds!

[*He is silent for a moment, his face set and stern.*]

[*PORGY waits. ARCHDALE turns wearily to him.*]

Of course, we can go to law about this, but it will take no end of time. There is an easier way.

[*Across the sunlit walls of Catfish Row falls the shadow of a great bird flying low, evidently just out of range of vision of audience. There is a sudden great commotion in the court. Cries of "Drive um away," "Don't let um light," "T'row dis brick." Brooms are waved at the bird overhead. Bricks thrown. PORGY looks up in anxiety. BESS comes to door with broom. ARCHDALE rises in perplexity.*]

PORGY

Dribe um off, Bess! Don't let um light.

ARCHDALE

What is it? What's the matter?

[*The shadow rises high. The commotion dies down.*]

PORGY

Dat's a buzzard. Yo' don' know dat bird like fo' eat dead folks?

ARCHDALE

But there's no one dead here, is there?

PORGY

Boss, dat bird mean trouble. Once de buzzard fold he wing an' light ober yo' do', yo' know all yo' happiness done dead.

[*With relief, the Negroes stand watching the bird disappear in the distance. ARCHDALE also looks after it.*]

PORGY

SERENA

[*Leaning from her window and surveying court*]: It sho' make me 'shamed to see all dese superstitious nigger' makin' spectacle ob demself befo' de w'ite gentlemans. Ain't we all see dat buzzard sit smack on Maria's table day fo' yesterday? An' whut happen? Nuttin'! No bad luck 'tall.

MARIA

[*Indignantly*]: Bad luck! Whut dat 'oman call bad luck? Ain't I had more drunk customer' yesterday dan any day dis mont'? Dey fair bus' up my shop. [*Goes into shop muttering indignantly.*]

ARCHDALE

[*Turning back to PORGY*]: Now, listen. Peter must have someone to go his bond. Do you know a man by the name of Huysenberg who keeps a corner shop over by the East End wharf?

PORGY

[*His face darkening*]: Yes, boss, I knows um. He rob eberv nigger he git he han' on.

ARCHDALE

I see you know him. Well, take him this ten dollars and tell him that you want him to go Peter's bond. He hasn't any money of his own, and his shop is in his

wife's name, but he has an arrangement with the magistrate that makes him entirely satisfactory. [*Hands PORGY a ten-dollar bill.*] Do you understand?

PORGY

Yes, boss. T'ank yo', boss.

[ARCHDALE, *about to go, hesitates, looks at goat-cart.*]

ARCHDALE

Porgy, there's another little matter I want to speak to you about. The last few weeks you've been begging right under my office window. I wish you'd find another place. [*Noticing PORGY's troubled expression*]: There are lots of other street corners.

PORGY

[*Sadly*]: I done try all de oder corner, boss. Ebery time I stop fo' beg, somebody tell' me to keep mobin'. But I been beggin' under yo' window fo' t'ree week' now, an' I beginnin' to say to myself, "Porgy, yo' is fix fo' life. Mus' be yo' is found a gentlemans whut got place in de heart fo' de poor cripple."

ARCHDALE

I have a place in my heart for the cripple but not for the goat.

PORGY

Dis bery nice goat, boss. Lawyer Frazier say yo' t'ink he need soap. But I don't see how dat can be,

boss. Two week han' runnin' now dat goat eat up Serena's washin' soap.

ARCHDALE

He doesn't need it inside.

PORGY

[*Mystified*]: Whut goat want wid soap outside?
[*Suddenly enlightened*]: Oh, yo' don' like to smell um?
[FRAZIER comes from shop. Sees ARCHDALE. Approaches. Stands waiting, hat in hand. PORGY is now all smiles.]

Dat all right, boss. By tumorroh I goin' hab' dis goat wash till yo' can't tell um from one ob dose rose bush in de park.

ARCHDALE

I'm sorry, Porgy. But you must find another place.

FRAZIER

Good-mornin', Misteh Archdale. I done gib' dis nigger yo' message. [*Sternly to PORGY*]: 'Membuh what I tell yo'—*Mobe on!*

ARCHDALE

All right, Frazier. [*To PORGY*]: If Peter isn't out in a week, let me know.

[*Turning to take leave*]: I suppose you're all going to the picnic to-day.

[*The Negroes nod and smile. PORGY looks wistfully at BESS, who stands behind him in the doorway. ARCHDALE is crossing toward gate.*]

JAKE

Yas, boss. We goin'.

PORGY

Bess, ain't yo' change yo' mind 'bout picnic now yo' gots divo'ce?

[ARCHDALE catches word "divorce," turns.]

ARCHDALE

Divorce?

PORGY

[*Proudly*]: Yas, boss. Misteh Frazier jus' sell my 'oman a divo'ce. She an honest 'oman now.

ARCHDALE

[*Sternly, to FRAZIER, who is looking guilty*]: Didn't the judge tell you that if you sold any more divorces he'd put you in jail? I've a good mind to report you.

FRAZIER

Mus' be dat judge fergit dat I votes de Democratic ticket.

ARCHDALE

That won't help you now. The gentleman from the North, who has come down to better moral conditions

among the Negroes, says you are a menace to morals. He's going to have you indicted if you don't quit.

PORGY

[*Suspiciously; handing paper to ARCHDALE*]: Ain't dis no good as he stan', boss? 'Cause I ain't goin' pay um fo' no more complications.

[*As ARCHDALE glances over the paper, PORGY glares vindictively at FRAZIER.*]

Dat nigger come 'round heah in he By-God coat, an' fo' yo' can crack yo' teet', he gone wid yo' las' cent.

ARCHDALE

[*Reading*]: "I, Simon Frazier, hereby divorce Bess and Crown for a charge of one dollar and fifty cents cash. Signed, SIMON FRAZIER." Well, that's simple enough. [*Examines seal.*] "Sealed—Charleston Steamboat Company." Where did you get this seal?

FRAZIER

I done buy um from de junk-shop Jew, boss.

ARCHDALE

Don't you know that there is no such thing as divorce in this state?

FRAZIER

I heah tell dere ain't no such er t'ing fuh de w'ite folks; but de nigger need um so bad, I ain't see no

reason why I can't make one up whut sattify de nigger.
[His voice breaks.] Dem divo'ce is keepin' me alibe,
 boss, an' whut mo', he is keepin' de nigger straight.

ARCHDALE

How's that?

FRAZIER

Dat jedge say de gots to lib togedder anyhow till
 dey done dead. Dat's de law, he say. But nigger ain't
 make dat way. I done get my black folks all properly
 moralize, an' now he say he goin' jail me. Ef I stops
 now de nigger leabe each odder anyway. Ef it don't cos'
 de nigger nuttin' to leabe he wife, he ain't goin'
 keep she er mont'. But when he gots fuh pay dolluh to
 get way, he goin' t'ink twice 'fore he trabble.

[ARCHDALE keeps from laughing with difficulty.]

BESS

Ain't mah divo'ce no good, boss? Porgy done pay
 one dolluh an' er half fuh it.

ARCHDALE

[Looking at paper]: I could hardly say that it is
 legal.

BESS

Legal! Dat wo'd mean good?

ARCHDALE

Well, sometimes.

PORGY

Plenty ob our frien' is divo'ce', boss.

ARCHDALE

[*With accusing look at FRAZIER, who cringes*]: So I hear. [*Again consults paper.*] You've left this man, Crown, and intend to stay with Porgy?

BESS

Yes, suh.

ARCHDALE

I suppose this makes a respectable woman of you. Um—on the whole—I'd keep it. I imagine that respectability at one-fifty would be a bargain anywhere. [*Hands paper to BESS. Turns back to FRAZIER.*] But remember, Frazier: *No more divorces!* Or to jail you go. I won't report you this time.

[*The goat sticks its head out door.*] PORGY *throws his arm around its neck.* ARCHDALE *turns to go.*

Good-morning. [*Crosses toward gate.*]

FRAZIER

[*Close by PORGY's door. Recovering from his emotion enough to speak*]: Gawd bless yo', boss. Good-mornin', boss.

PORGY

[*Imitating FRAZIER's professional manner*]: Mobe on, please. Mobe on! I gots er bery polite goat heah whut object to de smell ob de jail bird.

[*ARCHDALE, overhearing, laughs suddenly. Goes out gate, his shoulders shaking with laughter. FRAZIER moves off, talks to Negroes in background, and soon leaves the court. BESS sits by PORGY on step.*]

Ain't yo' hear de boss laugh?

BESS

Fo' sho' I heah um laugh.

PORGY

[*Hugging goat*]: No, no, bruddah, we ain't goin' mobe on. When de nigger make de buckra laugh, he done win. We goin' spend we life under Misteh Archdale's window. Yo' watch!

[*Draws himself up by door frame, goes inside. BESS remains on step. St. Michael's chimes the three-quarter hour. Preparations for the picnic are now at their height. One by one the women, when not on stage, have changed to their most gorgeously coloured dresses. Men and women are now wearing sashes all bearing the legend: "Repent Ye Saith the Lord." The leaders have also badges denoting their various ranks: "Marshal," etc. Baskets are*

being assembled in the court. The court is full of bustle and confusion. SPORTING LIFE saunters over to BESS, who is sitting on step wistfully watching the picnic preparations.]

SPORTING LIFE

'Lo, Bess! Goin' to picnic?

BESS

No, guess I'll stay home.

SPORTING LIFE

Picnics all right fo' dese small-town nigger', but we is used to de high life. Yo' an' me onderstan' each odder. I can't see fo' de life ob me what yo' hangin' 'round dis place for! Wid yo' looks, Bess, an' yo' way wid de boys, dere's big money fo' yo' an' me in Noo Yo'k.

BESS

[*Quietly*]: I can't remembuh eber meet a nigger I likes less dan I does yo'.

SPORTING LIFE

[*Laughing*]: Oh, come on, now! How 'bout a little touch happy dus' fo' de ole time' sake?

BESS

I t'rough wid dat stuff.

SPORTING LIFE

Come on! Gib' me yo' hand.

[*Reaches out and takes her hand, draws it toward him, and with other hand unfolds paper ready to pour powder.*]

BESS

[*Wavering*]: I tells yo' I t'rough!

SPORTING LIFE

Jus' a pinch. Not 'nough to hurt a flea.

[*BESS snatches her hand away.*]

BESS

I done gib' up happy dus'.

SPORTING LIFE

Tell dat to somebody else! Nobody eber gib' up happy dus'.

[*Again he takes her hand and she does not resist. Gazes fascinated at the powder. PORGY's hand reaches suddenly into the open space of the door; seizes SPORTING LIFE's wrist in an iron grip. SPORTING LIFE looks at the hand in astonishment mixed with a sort of horror.*]

Leggo, yo' damn cripple!

[*The hand twists SPORTING LIFE's wrist till he relin-*

quishes BESS's hand and grunts with pain. Then PORGY's hand is silently withdrawn.]
Gawd, what a grip fo' a piece ob a man!

BESS

[*Rising*]: Go 'long now.

SPORTING LIFE

[*Regaining his swagger*]: All right! Yo' men friend' come an' dey go. But 'membuh, ole Sportin' Life an' de happy dus' here all along. [*Saunters along—goes out gate.*]

[*From the distance is heard the blare of a discordant band. It is playing "Ain't It Hard to Be a Nigger," though the tune is scarcely recognizable to the audience. The Negroes, however, are untroubled by the discords. One or another sings a line or two of the song. A jumble of voices rises above the music: "Here come de orphans!" "Dere de orphan band down de block!" "Le's we go!" etc. A man passes outside the gate, stopping long enough to call in to the occupants of Catfish Row: "Eberybody gettin' in line up de block. You nigger' bes' hurry."*]

PORGY comes out on doorstep to watch. Sits. BESS stands beside him absorbed in the gay scene. PORGY looks at her keenly, troubled.]

JAKE

[*In the midst of his preparations*]: Come 'long to de picnic, Bess! [*Does not wait for reply.*]

PORGY

[*Triumphantly*]: Dere! Don' yo' hear Jake ask yo' fo' go? Go 'long!

BESS

Plenty ob de mens ask me. Yo' ain't hear none ob de ladies sayin' nuttin'.

PORGY

Bess, yo' can put on my lodge sash an' be just as good as any 'oman in dat crowd.

BESS

[*With a little laugh*]: Yo' an' me know it take more'n sash.

[*The confusion grows. Picnickers once started on their way come scurrying back for forgotten bundles. SCIPIO runs in at gate in high excitement.*]

SCIPIO

[*Breathless; to SERENA*]: Ma, I gots good news fo' yo'.

SERENA

What dat?

SCIPIO

De bandmaster say I can be a orphan!
[*The song breaks out in greater volume.*]

"Ain't it hahd to be a nigger!
Ain't it hahd to be a nigger!
Ain't it hahd to be a nigger!
Cause yo' can't git yo' rights when yo' do.
I was sleepin' on a pile ob lumbah
Jus' as happy as a man could be
When a w'ite man woke me from my slumbah
An' he say, 'Yo' gots fo' work now cause yo' free.'"

[*Other voices are calling back and forth: "How dem little nigger' can play!" "Ain't yo' ready! Time fo' go!" "We off fo' Kittiwah!"*]

The band plays with more abandon. BESS wears the expression of a dreamer who sees herself in the midst of the merrymakers. Her feet begin to shuffle in time to the music. PORGY does not look up, but his eyes watch the shuffling feet.]

PORGY

[*Mournfully*]: Yo' can't tell me yo' ain't wants to go.

[*The Negroes troop across the court all carrying their baskets. In twos and threes they go out at the gate. Among the last to go, MARIA comes hurrying from her shop carrying a gigantic basket.*]

Turns to follow the others. Sees PORGY and BESS. Hesitates. As though afraid of being left behind, turns again toward gate. Then resolutely sets down her basket.]

MARIA

What de mattuh wid yo', Sistuh? Ain't yo' know yo' late fo' de picnic?

[A sudden wave of happiness breaks over BESS's face. She is too surprised to answer.]

PORGY

Bess says she ain't figgerin' to go.

MARIA

[Crosses rapidly to them]: Sho' she goin'! Eberybody goin'. She gots to help me wid my basket. I gots 'nough fo' six. Where yo' hat? *[Reaches hat just inside door and puts it on BESS's head.]*

PORGY

[Taking sash from pocket and holding it out to BESS]: Here my sash, Bess.

[MARIA unties BESS's apron. Throws it through door.

Takes sash from PORGY, pins it across BESS's breast, jerking her peremptorily about to save time. Then starts for her basket.]

MARIA

Come 'long now!

BESS

[*Hesitating*]: I hates fo' leabe yo', Porgy.

PORGY

[*Happily*]: I too happy fo' hab' yo' go.

MARIA

Ain't yo' goin' help me wid dis basket?

[BESS hurries to her and takes one handle of basket.]

See yo' some mo', Porgy!

[MARIA crosses rapidly to gate. To keep her hold on the basket, BESS is forced to hurry.]

BESS

[*Looking back*]: Good-bye, Porgy!

[MARIA, apparently seeing the others far ahead and anxious not to be left behind, breaks into a lumbering run, dragging BESS after her. BESS is waving to PORGY as she goes.]

The voices of the Negroes grow fainter. Then the last distant crashes of the band are heard, and the court is quiet.

PORGY sits on his doorstep dreaming, gazing happily into space, rocking a little. Takes pipe from his pocket, knocks out ashes; lights it.

Across the sunlit walls falls the shadow of the buzzard flying lazily over the court. PORGY remains in happy abstraction, oblivious of the bird. Puffs leisurely at his pipe.

The shadow hovers over his door; then falls across his face. He looks up suddenly and sees the bird. Swift terror sweeps into his face.]

PORGY

[Frantically]: Get out ob here! Don' yo' light! Lef' it! Yo' hear me! Lef' it! *[He waves futile arms at it. The bird continues to hover above him.]* Get out! Somebody bring broom! Don' yo' light on my door, yo' debil! Help! Somebody help me! Oh, Gawd!

[He struggles down the steps and at last reaches the brick.]

The shadow wings of the bird close as it comes to rest directly over PORGY's door. Grasping the brick, he again looks up to take aim. His fingers slowly relax, and the brick falls to the ground.]

'Tain't no use now. 'Tain't no use. He done lit.

[PORGY regains his seat on step and sits looking up at the bird with an expression of hopelessness as the curtain falls.]

CURTAIN

Scene Two

Kittiwah Island. Moonlight revealing a narrow strip of sand backed by a tangled palmetto thicket. In the distance (right) the band is playing "Ain't It Hard to Be a Nigger." JAKE, MINGO, and several others troop

across stage from left to right, swinging apparently empty baskets.

MINGO

Dis been some picnic, but, Lor', I tired!

JAKE

[Swinging his basket in a circle]: Dis basket some lighter fo' carry dan when we come out.

[Breaks into song: "Ain't It Hard," etc. The others join in. They go off right, their song growing fainter in distance.]

SERENA and LILY enter, followed a moment later by BESS and MARIA. MARIA is puffing, out of breath.]

MARIA

I ain't no han' fo' walk so fas' on a full stomach.
[Stops abruptly. Looks about her on ground.]

SERENA

Yo' goin' miss de boat ef yo' ain't hurry, Sistuh.

MARIA

It was jus' about heah I los' my pipe. I 'membuh dere was palmetto sort ob twisted like dat.

LILY

How come yo' lose yo' pipe?

MARIA

[*Searching ground. The others help her*]: I was sittin' under de tree a-smokin', an' I see a Plat-eye ha'nt a-lookin' at me t'rough de palmetto leaf. An', 'fo yo' can crack yo' teet', I is gone from heah, but my pipe ain't gone wid me.

LILY

Plat-eye ha'nt! What was he like?

MARIA

Two big eye' like fireball a-watchin' me.

SERENA

[*Scornfully*]: Plat-eye ha'nt! Yo' ain't read nuttin' in de Bible 'bout Plat eye, is yo'?

MARIA

I ain't needs to read 'bout 'em. I sees 'em lookin' at me t'rough de palmetto leaf.

SERENA

Jus' like yo' hab' buzzard set on yo' table two day ago, an' yo' hab' mighty ha'd time a-thinkin' up some bad luck to lay to um.

MARIA

Bad luck! Ain't I lose my pipe dat I smoke dese twenty yeah', an' my mudder smoke um befo' me?

PORGY

LILY

I ain't partial to sleepin' out wid de rattlesnake'.
Les' we go or de boat go widout us.

MARIA

Ef dat boat go widout me, dey's goin' to be some sick
nigger' in Catfish Row when I gets back.

[*Steamboat whistles off right. MARIA answers it.*]

Hold yo' holt! I ain't goin' till I gets my pipe.

BESS

Yo' bes' go along, Maria, and le's we whut is de fas'
walker' look fo' um a bit.

MARIA

[*Pointing left*]: It might hab' been a little farder
back dat way I lose um.

[*BESS begins to search at left and wanders off left, her
eyes combing the ground.*]

An' it might hab' been a little farder dese way.

[*Goes off right searching. LILY follows. SERENA con-
tinues her search on stage.*]

LILY

[*Off right*]: I ain't see um nowheres. Le's we go.

MARIA

[*Farther in distance*]: I goin' fin' um.

[*From the blackness of the thicket two eyes can be
seen watching SERENA. As she turns in her quest,*

she sees them. For a moment, she is motionless; then her breath catches in a shuddering gasp of horror, and she flees swiftly off right. A snatch of the song rises suddenly in distance and quickly dies down again. BESS comes on from left, her head bent, still searching.

A great black hand creeps slowly out among the palmetto branches and draws them aside. BESS hears the sound. Straightens, stands rigid, listening.]

BESS

[In a low, breathless voice]: Crown?

CROWN

Yo' know bery well dis Crown.

[She turns and looks at him. He partly emerges from the thicket, naked to the waist, his cotton trousers frayed away to the knees.]

I seen yo' land, an' I been waitin' all day fo' yo'. I mos' dead on dis damn islan'!

BESS

[Looks at him slowly]: Yo' ain't look mos' dead. Yo' bigger'n eber.

CROWN

Oh, plenty bird' egg, oyster, an' t'ing. But I mos' dead ob lonesome wid not a Gawd's person fo' swap a word wid. Lor' I'se glad yo' come!

PORGY

BESS

I can't stay, Crown, or de boat go widout me.

CROWN

Got any happy dus' wid yo'?

BESS

No.

CROWN

Come on! Ain't yo' gots jus' a little?

BESS

No, I ain't. I done gib up dope.
[CROWN *laughs loudly.*]

CROWN

It sho' do a lonesome man good to hab' he 'oman
come an' swap a couple joke wid um.

BESS

Dat's de Gawd's trut'. An' 'sides—I gots sompen
fo' tell yo'.

CROWN

Yo' bes' listen to whut I gots fo' tell yo'. I waitin'
here till de cotton begin comin' in. Den libin' 'll be easy.
Davy 'll hide yo' an' me on de ribber boat fur as Sa-
vannah. Who yo' libin' wid now?

BESS

I libin' wid de cripple Porgy.

CROWN

[*Laughing*]: Yo' gots de funny tas' in men. But dats yo' business. I ain't care who yo' takes up wid while I'm away. But 'membuh whut I tol' yo'! He's temporary! I guess it be jus' couple ob week' now 'fo' I comes fo' yo'!

BESS

[*With an effort*]: Crown, I gots sompen fo' tell yo'.

CROWN

What dat?

BESS

I—I sort ob change' my way'.

CROWN

How yo' change'?

BESS

I—I libin' wid Porgy now—an' I libin' decent.

CROWN

Yo' heah whut I tol' yo'? I say in couple week I com-in' fo' yo', an' yo' goin' tote fair 'less yo' wants to meet yo' Gawd. Yo' gits dat?

PORGY

BESS

Crown, I tells yo' I change'. I stayin' wid Porgy fo' good.

[*He seizes her by the arm and draws her savagely toward him. The steamboat whistles.*]

Take yo' han' off me. I goin' miss dat boat!

CROWN

Dere's anudder boat day atter to-morruh.

BESS

I tells yo' I means what I says. Porgy my man now.

CROWN

[*Jeering at her*]: I ain't had a laugh in weeks.

BESS

Take yo' hot han' off me. I tells yo' I stayin' wid Porgy for keeps.

CROWN

Yo' is tellin' me yo' radder hab' dat crawlin' cripple dan Crown?

BESS

[*Taking a propitiatory tone*]: It like dis, Crown—I de only 'oman Porgy eber hab'. An' I thinkin' how it goin' be if all dese odder nigger' goes back to Catfish

Row to-night, an' I ain't come home to um. He be like a little chil' dat los' its ma.

[CROWN, still holding her, throws back his head and laughs. BESS begins to be frightened.]

Yo' can laugh, but I tells yo' I change'!

CROWN

Yo' change' all right. Yo' ain't neber been so funny.

[The boat whistles. She tries to pull away. He stops laughing and holds her tighter with lowering look. Draws her nearer.]

BESS

Lemme go, Crown! Yo' can get plenty odder women.

CROWN

What I wants wid odder women? I gots a 'oman. An' dats yo'. See?

BESS

[Trying flattery]: Yo' know how it always been wid yo', Crown—yo' ain't neber want for a 'oman. Look at dis chest, an' look at dese arm' yo' got! Dere's plenty better-lookin' gal dan me. Yo' know how it always been wid yo'. Dese five year 'now I been yo' 'oman—yo' could kick me in de street, an' den, when yo' ready fo' me back, yo' could whistle fo' me, an' dere I was again a-lickin' yo' han'. What yo' wants wid Bess? She gettin' ole now. [She sees that her flattery has failed and

is terrified.] Dat boat goin' widout me! Lemme go! Crown, I'll come back fo' see yo'. I swear to Gawd I'll come on de Friday boat. Jus' lemme go *now*! I can't stop out here all night. I 'fraid! Dere's t'ings movin' in de t'icket—rattlesnake, an' such! Lemme go, I tells yo'. Take yo' han' off me!

CROWN

[*Holding her and looking steadily at her*]: No man ever take my 'oman from me. It goin' to be good joke on Crown ef he lose um to one wid no leg' an' no gizzard. [*Draws her closer*]: So yo' is change, is yo'? [*Grips her more tightly. Looks straight into her eyes.*] Whut yo' say now?

BESS

[*Summoning the last of her resolution*]: I stayin' wid Porgy fo' good.

[*His jaw shoots forward, and his huge shoulder muscles bulge and set. Slowly his giant hands close round her throat. He brings his eyes still closer to hers. The boat whistles long and loud, but neither gives sign of hearing it. After a moment, CROWN laughs with satisfaction at what he sees in BESS's eyes.*

His hands leave her throat and clasp her savagely by the shoulders. BESS throws back her head with a wild hysterical laugh.]

CROWN

I knows yo' ain't change'! Wid yo' an' me, it always goin' be de same. See?

[He swings her about and hurls her face forward through an opening in the thicket. Then, with a low laugh, he follows her. She regains her balance and goes on ahead of him. The band is still playing, but growing faint in the distance.]

CURTAIN

ACT THREE

ACT THREE

Scene One

St. Michael's chimes the half hour. Curtain. The court before dawn. Lights in a few windows: MARIA's, JAKE's, PORGY's.

The fishermen are preparing for an early departure.

JAKE

[Coming from his door]: Dat all de breakfas' I time fo'. *[Calls to men in MARIA's shop]:* Come on yo' mens! It almost light.

[CLARA comes from their room, the baby in her arms.

Her eyes are anxious and reproachful, but she says nothing.]

JIM

[Coming from MARIA's shop, wiping his mouth]: Yo' ready, Jake? We bes' be off.

JAKE

Le's we go!

[MARIA appears in her doorway, wiping hands on her apron.]

PORGY

MARIA

Good-bye, boys! Hopes yo' has de same good luck to-day!

[JAKE quickly takes baby from CLARA's arms, kisses it hurriedly, and returns it to CLARA.]

JAKE

'Bye, big boy!

[BESS's voice is heard from her room, droning in delirium. All the Negroes stop suddenly to listen.]

BESS

Eighteen mile to Kittiwah—eighteen mile—palmetto bush by de sho'—rattlesnake an' such.

[JAKE crosses to PORGY's window.]

JAKE

How Bess dis mornin'?

[PORGY appears at window.]

PORGY

She no better.

JAKE

She still out she head?

[PORGY nods.]

BESS

Bess goin' fin' um fo' yo'. Dat all right, Maria, Bess goin' fin' um . . .

[JAKE *shakes his head sadly. Hurriedly recrosses to the other men. They go toward gate together, CLARA following.*]

JIM

I bet dat catch we made yesterday de bigges' catch eber make 'round dese parts.

NELSON

We bes' make de mores ob to-day. Look to me like de las' good day we goin' hab'. Gots a wet tas' to um.

JAKE

Don' yo' know dat ain't de kin' ob talk to talk 'fore my 'oman? Ain't yo' hears de raggin' I gits ebery day? [*Laughs.*] But, see! I gots 'er trained now. She ain't sayin' a word. So long, Clara!

[JAKE *gives CLARA a hurried, affectionate pat and follows the other men as they troop out the gate, talking and laughing. The gate clangs shut behind them. CLARA goes silently into her room, closes door.*]

BESS

Mus' be right heah on de groun'. Bess goin' fin' um . . . [BESS's voice *drones on.*]

[MARIA, *in her doorway, listens a moment. Then crosses to PORGY's door; hesitates, awed by the mystery of delirium. SERENA silently crosses the*

court and joins MARIA. They listen a moment longer.]

SERENA

[In a low voice]: She still out she head?
[MARIA nods. They stand silent.]

BESS

[From the room]: Eighteen mile to Kittiwah—
palmetto bush by de sho'. Eighteen mile to Kittiwah . . .

[PETER appears outside the gate. He seems older and feebler, but his face is joyful. Pushes gate open, comes into court, looking eagerly about. Sees the two women and crosses toward them.]

PETER

How eberybody?
[They turn and see him.]

MARIA

[Joyfully]: Ef it ain't ole Peter!

SERENA

Heah Daddy Peter home again. Hey, yo' Lily! Heah yo' ole man. Lordy, we is glad fo' see yo'!

[LILY comes running from her door. Hurries to PETER and greets him joyfully.]

LILY

Ef it ain't my ole gran'daddy!

PETER

I begin fo' t'ink mebby I ain't eber see Catfish Row——

[*BESS's voice rises in a sudden wail. The women turn awestricken faces toward PORGY's door. PETER, who has not heard, is mystified by their expressions. His words die away. He looks questioningly from one to another. BESS again takes up her monotonous refrain.*]

BESS

Palmetto bush sort ob twisted like—rattlesnake an' t'ing . . .

PETER

Whut de mattuh?

MARIA

[*Shouting into his ear*]: Porgy's 'oman bery sick.

LILY

[*Shouting*]: She out she head.

PETER

How long she been like dat?

MARIA

More'n a week now. Eber since we hab de picnic on Kittiwah.

SERENA

She wander off by sheself an' git lost in de palmetto t'icket. She ain't come home fo' two day.

BESS

Dat's right, Maria, I goin' fin' um—eighteen mile to Kittiwah—eighteen mile . . .

PORGY

[*Within room, soothingly*]: Das all right, Bess. Yo' here wid Porgy now.

BESS

[*Monotonously*]: Palmetto bush by de sho' . . .
[MARIA, SERENA, and PETER *stand wide-eyed, looking in at the door. They do not go too near.*]

PORGY

Yo' right here wid Porgy an' nuttin' can't hurt yo'.
Soon de cool wedder comin' an' chill off dese febers.

PETER

[*Shaking his head*]: Dat 'oman bery sick.
[*The women nod.*]

PORGY

Ain't yo' remembuh how de cool win' come to town wid de smell ob pine tree, an' how de stars is all polishin' up like w'ite folk's silber? Den eberybody git well. Ain't yo' know? Yo' jus' keep still an' watch what Porgy say.

[Silence in the room. CLARA comes from her door carrying her baby, crosses to the gate and stands looking out toward the sea.]

After a moment, PORGY comes from his door, softly closes it behind him.]

PORGY

I t'ink mebbly she goin' sleep now. *[Sinks wearily on to step.]*

[Dully]: Dat yo', Peter? A whole week gone, now, an' she ain't no better! What I goin' do?

[A moment of silence.]

PETER

Ef yo' wants to listen to me, I advise yo' to send she to de w'ite folks' hospital.

[Blank consternation. MARIA is first to find her voice.]

MARIA

[Speaking into his ears]: Fo' Gawd's sake, Peter! Ain't yo' know dey lets nigger' die dere so dey can gib um to de student'? I say dey gib um to de student'.

PETER

De student' ain't gits um till he done dead. Ain't dat so? Den he can't hurt um none. Ain't dat so too? An' I gots dis to say. One ob my w'ite folks is a nurse to de hospital. An' dat lady is a pure angel wid de sick nigger. Ef I sick to-morruh I goin' to she, an' what she say is good wid me. I wants dis carcass took care ob w'ile he is alibe. When he done dead, I ain't keer.

LILY

[*Shouting*]: Yo' ain't keer wedder yo' is cut up an' scatter, 'stead ob bein' bury in Gawd's own grabeyahd!

PETER

Well, mebby I ain't say I jus' as lief. But I t'ink Gawd onderstan' de succumstance an' make allowance.

PORGY

[*Moaning*]: Oh, Gawd! Don' let um take Bess to de hospital!

SERENA

[*In injured tone*]: Mus' be yo' is all fergit how I pray Clara's baby out ob de convulsion. Dey ain't neber been a sick pusson or corpse in Catfish Row dat I has refuse' my prayers. Dey is fo' de righteous an' fo' de sinner all two.

PORGY

Dat's right, Sistuh. Yo' pray ober um. Dat can't hurt um none.

[SERENA closes her eyes and begins to sway.]

SERENA

Oh, Jedus who done trouble de watuh in de Sea ob Gallerie—

PORGY

Amen!

SERENA

—an' likewise who done cas' de debil out ob de afflicted time an' time again—

PETER

Oh, Jedus! [*Begins to sway.*]

SERENA

—what make yo' ain't lay yo' han' on dis sistuh' head—

LILY

Oh, my Fadder!

SERENA

—an' sen' de debil out ob she, down a steep place into de sea, like yo' used to do, time an' time again.

PORGY

PORGY

Time an' time again.

SERENA

Lif' dis poor cripple up out ob de dus'—

PETER

Allelujah!

SERENA

—an' lif' up he 'oman an' make she well, time an' time again.

[They sway a moment in silence. Then SERENA silently rises and departs. After a moment, PETER and LILY follow her.]

MARIA

[In a low voice]: Listen to me. Yo' wants dat 'oman cure up, ain't yo'?

PORGY

Yo' knows I does.

MARIA

Bery well, den. Why ain't yo' sen' to Lody?

PORGY

Fo' make conjur'?

MARIA

Yo' gots two dollah?

[PORGY *nods.*]

Den yo' bes' waste no time. Yo' go quick to Lody an' gib she de two dollah an' tell she to make conjur' fo' cas' de debil out ob Bess.

[MINGO *has sauntered in and taken a seat at the table by MARIA's door.*]

PORGY

How I goin' leabe Bess?

MINGO

Hey, Maria! How 'bout a little serbice?

MARIA

Here, yo', Mingo, come here!

[*He crosses to them.*]

Yo' do little job fo' Porgy an' I gib yo' de free breakfas' when yo' gits back. Yo' know Lody, de conjur' 'oman?

MINGO

Who don't know Lody!

PORGY

MARIA

Yo' go to Lody an' tell she fo' make conjur' fo' cas' de debil out ob Porgy's Bess. He goin' gib' yo' two dollah fo she.

[*PORGY has taken out his money bag and is counting out pennies.*]

MINGO

Dat long way to Lody's 'fore breakfus'.

MARIA

Listen to de nigger! Ef yo' wa'n't dead on yo' feet, yo' could get dere an' back in ten minute'.

MINGO

Whut yo' gots fo' breakfus'?

MARIA

I gots de butts meat fo' grease yo' mout', an' de corn bread an' 'lasses fo' sweet yo' mout'.

MINGO

How 'bout er little shark steak?

MARIA

Listen to me, nigger! I ain't serbe no free breakfus' alley cat.

MINGO

[*Belligerently*]: Who you callin' alley cat?

MARIA

[*Despairingly*]: Dis nigger ain't know nuttin'! Get dis! I decides fo' my customer' whut dey goin' hab', but ain't yo' neber been in one ob dem stylish rest'rant where de name ob all de victual' is writ up on de wall, an' yo can pick an' choose 'mong um? Dat's alley cat.

PORGY

I goin' gib yo' quarter fo' goin'.

MINGO

Ah! He ain't so far now!

PORGY

[*Handing him money*]: Here de two dollah fo' Lody an' de quarter fo' yo'self.

[*MINGO starts for gate.*]

MARIA

Dat breakfas' I promise yo' goin' be on de table in ten minute'. Ef yo' ain't hurry, he'll be cold.

MINGO

I be back fo' yo' can crack yo' teet'.

[*Goes out gate and off to left. St. Michael's chimes the three-quarter hour.*]

MARIA

Quarter till five. Eben dat lazy nigger can't spend more'n ten minute' gittin' to Lody's. By fib o'clock sure, she goin' hab she conjur' make.

PORGY

[*Eagerly*]: Yo' t'ink dat cure she?

MARIA

I ain't t'ink. I know. Yo' watch what I say, my brudder. Bess good as cure right now. Yo' gots jus' a quartuh hour to wait. Come five o'clock, dat 'oman well. [*Crosses to her shop. Goes about her work.*]

[*SERENA has gone to work at her tubs. She now calls to CLARA, who still stands gazing out through gate.*]

SERENA

What yo' stan' dere fo', Clara? Boats must be out ob sight by now.

CLARA

Dey been out ob sight fo' long time now.

MARIA

[*Working at her table*]: Yo' ain't gots no call fo' worry 'bout yo' man. Dis goin' be a fine day.

CLARA

I neber see de watuh look so black.

MARIA

Well, has yo' eber see it look so still?

CLARA

No. He too still. An' somet'ing in my head keep a-listenin' fo' dat hurricane bell. [*Crosses to SERENA.*]

Sits on bench.] Let me sit here wid yo', an' yo' talk a lot.

MARIA

[*Who has crossed to pump with kettle*]: I got a feelin'—

SERENA

What yo' gots a feelin' 'bout?

MARIA

I gots a feelin' when dat 'oman of Porgy's got lost on Kittiwah Islan' she done been wid Crown.

SERENA

[*Her face darkening*]: Yo' t'ink dat nigger on Kittiwah?

MARIA

I always figger he been dere in dem deep pamlettuhs, an' when I hear de t'ings dat 'oman keep sayin' in she sickness, I sure ob two t'ing'—one, dat he is dere, and two, dat she been wid um.

CLARA

Yo' beliebe she still run wid dat nigger!

MARIA

Dem sort ob mens ain't need to worry 'bout habin' women.

SERENA

Bess goin' stay wid Porgy ef she know what good fo' she!

MARIA

She know all right, an' she lobe Porgy. But, ef dat nigger come after she, dey ain't goin' be nobody 'round here but Porgy an' de goat.

[*As MARIA speaks, PORGY comes from his door. The other women sign to MARIA to be careful. Seeing PORGY, she drops the subject and returns to her shop.*]

SERENA

[*Piling clothes in basket*]: Come on, Clara, lend me a han' wid dese clothes.

[*CLARA, holding baby on one arm, takes one handle of basket. SERENA lifts the other. They carry it through SERENA's door.*]

PORGY sits on his doorstep, his face tense, waiting.

DADDY PETER comes from his door followed by LILY, who carries the honey tray. She places it on his head and returns to room, closing the door. PETER crosses toward gate, beginning instantly to chant.]

PETER

I gots honey.—Has yo' gots honey?—Yes, ma'am, I gots honey.—You gots honey cheap?

[*A woman leans from an upper window and calls.*]

THE WOMAN

Oh, honey man! Honey man!

PETER

[*Going on*]: Yes, ma'am, my honey cheap.

THE WOMAN

Hey, dere! I wants some honey!

[*PETER goes out gate and off to right.*]

PETER

You gots honey in de comb?—Yes, ma'am, I gots honey in de comb.—Heah come de honey man!—I gots honey.

[*PORGY sits waiting. St. Michael's begins to chime the hour. PORGY grows suddenly rigid.*

As the chimes continue, MARIA comes to her doorway and stands motionless, also listening. She and PORGY gaze at each other across court with tense, expectant faces. The chimes cease.]

PORGY

[*In low, vibrant voice*]: Now de time! Oh, Gawd!

[*St. Michael's strikes five. As PORGY and MARIA still wait motionless, BESS's voice is heard, weakly.*]

BESS

Porgy!

[*PORGY and MARIA are both electrified by the sound. They gaze at each other with joyful faces, but for a second neither moves.*]

Porgy! Dat yo' dere, ain't it? Why yo' ain't talk to me?

PORGY

[*With a half-laugh that breaks in a sob*]: T'ank Gawd! T'ank Gawd!

[*BESS appears in the doorway in her white nightgown. She is very weak.*]

BESS

I lonesome here all by myself.

[*MARIA crosses to her quickly. Gently assists her as she lowers herself to seat beside PORGY.*]

BESS

It hot in dere. Let me sit here a while in de cool.

MARIA

I'll get yo' blanket.

PORGY

Maria, ain't she ought to go back to bed?

MARIA

[*Going past them into room*]: Let she be. What I done tell yo'? Ain't dat conjur' cured she?

BESS

I been sick, ain't it?

PORGY

Oh, Bess! Bess!

BESS

What de mattuh?

PORGY

[*Almost sobbing with relief*]: Yo' been bery sick! T'ank Gawd de conjur' cure yo'!

[*MARIA reappears with blanket, which she wraps about BESS.*]

MARIA

I ain't goin' let yo' set here bery long. [*Returns to her shop.*]

PORGY

I got yo' back, Bess!

BESS

How long I been sick, Porgy?

PORGY

Jus' a week. Yo' come back from Kittiwah wid yo' eye like fireball, an' Maria git yo' in de bed. An' yo' ain't know me!

[*BESS suddenly catches her breath in a stifled sob.*]

What de mattuh, Bess?

BESS

I guess I ain't know nuttin' wid de feber—or I ain't come back at all!

PORGY

Yo' ain't come back to Porgy?
[*She begins to moan hysterically.*]

BESS

No, I ain't ought to come back!

PORGY

[*Soothingly*]: Dat all right. Don' yo' worry none,
Bess. I knows yo' been wid Crown.
[*BESS draws in her breath sharply, then speaks in a
whisper.*]

BESS

How yo' know?

PORGY

'Yo' been talk 'bout um while yo' out ob yo' head.

BESS

What I say?

PORGY

Yo' ain't say nuttin' 'cept crazy stuff, but Gawd
gib cripple to know many t'ing' he ain't gib strong
men.

BESS

Yo' ain't want me go away?

PORGY

No, I ain't want yo' go, Bess. [*Looks at her keenly.*]
[*A moment of silence.*]

Yo' neber lie to me, Bess.

BESS

No, I neber lie to yo'. Yo' gots to gib me dat.
[*Another silence.*]

PORGY

How t'ings stan' 'tween yo' an' Crown?

BESS

After a pause: He comin' fo' me when de cotton
come to town.

PORGY

Yo' goin'?

BESS

I tell um—yes.

[*PORGY turns his head from her and sits looking straight before him. After a moment, BESS reaches out timidly and lays her hand on his arm. Then she tries to encircle it with her fingers.*]

Porgy! Gawd! Yo' gots de arm like stebedore! Why
yo' muscle pull up like dat?

[*He looks at her, his face set and stern. She cowers, her hand still on his arm.*]

It makes me 'fraid!

[*A pause.*]

PORGY

Yo' ain't gots nuttin' fo' be 'fraid of. I ain't try to keep no 'oman what don' want to stay. Ef yo' wants to go wid Crown, dat fo' yo' to say.

BESS

I ain't wants to go, Porgy.
[PORGY looks at her with hope.]

BESS

But I ain't yo' kin'. When Crown put he hand on me dat day, I run to he like watuh. Some day again he goin' put he han' on my throat. It goin' be like dyin', den. But I gots to talk de trut' to yo'. When dem time come, I goin' to go.
[Silence.]

PORGY

[In a whisper]: Ef dey wa'n't no Crown, Bess! Ef dey was only jus' yo' an' Porgy, what den?
[She looks into his face with an expression of yearning. Then, suddenly, the weakness of her illness sweeps down upon her and she breaks out hysterically, trembling with fear.]

BESS

Oh, fo' Gawd's sake, Porgy! Don' let dat man come an' handle me! Ef yo' is willin' to keep me, den lemme stay! [Her voice rises hysterically, broken by sobs.] Ef he jus' don' put dem hot han' on me, I can be good!

I can 'membuh! I can be happy! [*The sobs overcome her.*]

PORGY

Dere, dere, Bess.

[*Pats her arm soothingly, waiting for the storm to spend itself. She grows suddenly quiet, except for occasional silent, rending sighs.*]

Yo' ain't need to be afraid. Ain't yo' gots yo' man? Ain't yo' gots Porgy fo' take care ob yo'? What kin' ob nigger yo' tink yo' gots anyway, fo' let anudder nigger carry he 'oman? No, suh! Yo' gots yo' man now! Yo' gots Porgy!

[*Bess has become quiet. A pause.*]

Dere, now. Yo' been set up too long. Let Porgy help yo' back to bed.

[*He draws himself up by the door frame. Bess rises unsteadily and, with a hand on his arm, they make their way into the room. PORGY closes the door behind them.*]

MINGO appears outside the gate, steadies himself against it, then staggers through and crosses to MARIA'S table. Slumps into chair. Pounds on table, then buries head in his hands. MARIA comes to doorway.]

MARIA

Oh, dat yo', Mingo! Gawd A'mighty, how yo' gits drunk so fas'! [*Goes into shop and immediately re-*

turns with breakfast things on a tray. Begins putting them before him.] I bet yo' drink dat rot-gut stuff straight! Ain't yo' know nuff to pollute yo' whisky wid watuh?

MINGO

[*Pushing dishes away*]: Don' want dat stuff. Wants de shark steak.

MARIA

[*Hands on hips*]: So yo' don' want dat stuff! Bery well! Yo' wants de shark steak! Yo' t'ink I givin' shark steak wid de free breakfas'?

MINGO

I tells yo' I wants de shark steak. [*With uncertain movements, draws a handful of change from pocket.*]

MARIA

[*Mollified*]: Ob course, ef yo' goin' pay fo' um!

[*MINGO spills the money in a pile on table. It is all pennies. MARIA stares at it, then at him. Her eyes are suddenly filled with suspicion.*]

Where yo' gits dat money?

[*MINGO looks up at her stupidly. She speaks in a ferocious whisper.*]

Where yo' gits dat money?

[*MINGO seems to try to recollect.*]

He all pennies—jus' like Porgy gits fo' beggin'!

[*She suddenly seizes him, jerks him to his feet.*] Dats Porgy's money, I tells yo', what he gibe yo' fo' Lody! [MINGO opens his mouth to protest, searching wildly for words.]

MARIA

Don' yo' lie to me, nigger!

MINGO

I jus' take 'nough fo' li'l' drink.

[MARIA gives him a savage shake which seems to spill out further words.]

I t'ink Lody must habe move'. I can't find she. [*With weak bravado*]: Leggo me, ole lady! [*Tries to shake off her grip.*]

[MARIA holds him tighter and brings her face close to his. His eyes suddenly meet hers, and he sees a look of such cold ferocity that he quails and sobs with terror.]

MINGO

Oh, Jedus!

MARIA

Yo' low, crawlin' houn'! Yo' drink up de conjur' money ob a poor dyin' 'oman, an' ain't leabe she nuttin' but de Christian prayers! You listen to me, nig-

ger! [*Slowly and impressively*]: Fo' yo' own good, I goin' lock yo' up in my coset till yo' sober nuff to keep yo' mout' shut. Den mebbly I lets yo' loose. But I goin' to where I can git my han' on yo' again! Ef yo' eber tell Porgy—or any libin' pusson—dat yo' ain't deliber dat message to Lody, I goin' hab nigger blood on my soul when I stan' at de Jedgment. Now, yo', gots dat straight in yo' head?

[MINGO, *unable to speak, nods. She swings him suddenly about, hurls him into her room, and closes the door on him. Wipes her face on apron, looks with mystified expression toward PORGY's closed door. Baffled.*]

Mus' hab' been Jedus done cure Bess after all. [*Considers a moment. Takes a few steps toward PORGY's door. Then stops, with decision.*] No, I be damn ef He did. He ain't gots it in um. [*Goes into her room. Bangs door behind her.*]

[*For a moment, the court is empty and silent. Suddenly, the silence is broken by the deep, ominous clang of a bell, very different from the silver tone of St. Michael's.*]

Instantly, every resident of Catfish Row, excepting MINGO and BESS, is in the court or leaning from his window. Having come, they now stand motionless, scarcely breathing, listening to the bell.

CLARA, *with her baby, has come from SERENA's door, her eyes bright with terror.*]

MARIA

Mus' be de bell fo' a hot wave. Yo' see! He ain't goin' ring more'n twelbe.

LILY

[Who has been counting half audibly]: —ten—eleben—twelbe——

[For a moment no one breathes. Then the bell rings on. Every face is suddenly rigid with horror.]

CLARA

[Wildly]: Twenty! [She runs to the gate and looks off left.]

SERENA

[Following and seeking to comfort her]: Dat bell mus' be mistake! Ain't yo' membuh de las' hurricane? How he take two day' fo' blow up?

ANNIE

Now eberyt'ing quiet. Not a breaf ob air.
[All the Negroes have gone to the gate and are gazing off to left.]

PORGY

[From his window]: How de Custom House flag?

SERENA

He right dere on de pole, jus' like always.

PORGY

MARIA

[*Seeing it too, relieved*]: Don' yo' see dat flag dere, Clara?

SERENA

[*Reassuringly to CLARA*]: Dat ain't no hurricane signal, is it?

MARIA

Ain't yo' know long as de American flag wabin' ober de Custom House dat mean eberyting all right, jus' like——

[*They are all gazing off left at the distant flag. Suddenly, a new wave of horror sweeps simultaneously over every face. MARIA's speech breaks off with her lips still parted.*]

LILY

[*In a low, awed voice*]: Gawd! Dey take um down!
[*They continue to gaze, fascinated, but CLARA turns away, back into the court. Her terror has given way to dull hopelessness.*]

CLARA

Dey don' hab' to run up no hurricane signal to tell me nuttin'. My head stop listenin' fo' um now.

PORGY

De mens goin' see de signal an' come home quick.

CLARA

Dey can't see dat signal from de Blackfish Banks, an' dey dere by dis time.

ANNIE

[*Hysterically*]: How dey goin' come back wid no win' fo' de sail?

MARIA

[*Sternly silencing her*]: Dey can row in 'fo' dis storm come. He ain't here yet, is he?

POBGY

No, he ain't here yet.

LILY

I ain't fo' worryin' 'bout t'ing dat mightn't happen 'tall.

[*There is a general babble of voices: "Time 'nough fo' worry when de storm come!" "Mebby by to-mor-ruh we habe li'l' storm!" etc.*

While they reassure themselves, the sea is darkening. The shutters of Catfish Row begin to flap back and forth in a sudden wind. CLARA stands watching the swinging shutters.]

CURTAIN

Scene Two

Before the rise of the curtain the sound of wind and water begins and swiftly swells and rises. Through the wind the chimes and bell of St. Michael's are heard, sometimes rising clear and strong as the wind lulls, then lost completely in a sudden gust.

The curtain rises on SERENA's room, dim and shadowy in the light of guttering kerosene lamps. The Negroes are huddled together in groups. A few have found seats on the chairs and bed. Others sit on the floor. A small group at right, including SERENA and PETER, are on their knees, swaying and singing the monotonous chant of "The Judgment Day Spiritual."

PORGY and BESS sit together on the floor at left front. CLARA stands motionless at window, her baby in her arms. Every face is filled with fear. They shudder and draw closer together as the wind rises.]

THE SINGERS

"We will all sing togedduh on dat day,
We will all sing togedduh on dat day,
An' I'll fall upon my knees an' face de risin' sun,
Oh, Lord, hab' mercy on me!"

MARIA

[*Speaking above the monotonous chant*]: What yo' stan dere all de time a-lookin' out fo', Clara? Yo' can't see nuttin' in de dark.

CLARA

[*Gazing out between slats of closed shutters; in a flat, dull voice*]: I t'ink I see a little light now 'round de edge ob dis storm. He mus' be mos' daytime.

[*In a sudden silence of the wind, a faint, distant sound is heard.*]

ANNIE

What dat? Sound like a whinny.

CLARA

Somebody's poor horse in de watuh.

PORGY

[*Moaning*]: My poor li'l' goat. He goin' to dead. Dat goat's my leg'. I can't neber walk again!

MARIA

Dat's right sma't goat, Porgy. He goin' to climb on yo' bed an' keep he head out ob de watuh. Yo' watch whut I say!

PETER

Yo' bes' come sing wid me, Clara. Dat make yo' feel better.

CLARA

[*Suddenly hysterical*]: I mos' lose my min' wid yo' singin'. Yo' been singin' de same speritual since daylight yesterday!

SERENA

[*Severely*]: Ain't we want to be ready when de grabe gib up de dead an' Gabriel sound he trumpet?

SPORTING LIFE

I ain't so sure dis de Jedgment Day. We hab bad storm 'fore.

SERENA

Not like dis.

MINGO

I 'membuh my ma tell me, when dey hab' de earthquake here, all day de nigger' sing dat Jedgment Day speritual, waiting fo' de sound ob de trumpet. But he ain't de Jedgment Day den, an' mebbly he ain't now.

SERENA

Dat may be so, but dis ain't no time fo' takin' chances. [*Bursts again into song. Her group joins her.*]

[*The shutters suddenly fly apart and flap violently in the wind, drowning out the singing. The Negroes cower and draw closer together. Some of the men struggle to capture the flying shutters. BESS sits calm, gazing straight ahead of her. PORGY is watching her thoughtfully.*]

PORGY

[*In a brief moment of quiet*]: Yo' ain't 'fraid, Bess?
[*BESS shakes her head. A pause.*] What make yo' ain't
say nuttin'?

BESS

I jus' t'inkin'.
[*The men finally lash the shutters together with rope.*]
Yo' know whut I t'inkin' 'bout, Porgy.

PORGY

Yo' t'inkin' whut storm like dis mus' be like out on
de sea islands.
[*BESS nods.*]

BESS

Wabe' like dese mus' wash clean across Kittiwah.
[*After a moment, she lays her hand on his arm. PORGY
looks keenly into her eyes.*]

PORGY

Yo' sorry?

BESS

I sorry fo' any man lef' out in storm like dis. But I
can stop a-listenin' now fo' his step a-comin'. [*Puts
her hand in his.*] I guess yo' gots me fo' keeps, Porgy.

PORGY

Ain't I tells yo' dat all 'long.
[*A distant roar is heard, coming steadily nearer.*]

PORGY

LILY

[*Terror-stricken*]: Here he come now!

SERENA

Oh, Masteh! I is ready!
[*The crash and roar sweep by.*]

MARIA

Yo' can see um, Clara?

CLARA

He somebody's roof goin' by.

ANNIE

Gawd A'mighty!

PETER

Oh, Jedus, hab' a little pity!

SERENA

Le's we sing!
[*SERENA's group begins to sing, but before they have completed a single line CLARA cries out loudly.*]

CLARA

Fo' Gawd's sake, sing somet'ing else!
[*The singers are startled into silence. A blank pause.*
Then BESS begins to sing, "Somebody Knockin' at

de Door," and one by one the others join her till the whole room is singing.]

ALL

"Dere's somebody knockin' at de do'.

Dere's somebody knockin' at de do'.

Oh, Mary, oh, Mart'a,

Somebody knockin' at de do'.

"It's a moaner, Lord,

Somebody knockin' at de do'.

It's a moaner, Lord,

Somebody knockin' at de do'.

Oh, Mary, oh, Mart'a,

Somebody knockin' at de do'.

"It's a sinnuh, Lord," etc.

"It's my preachuh, Lord," etc.

"It's my Jedus, Lord," etc.

[The spiritual swells and gains in tempo; the rhythm of the patting and swaying grows. A few begin to shout.]

PETER

I hear death knockin' at de door. *[Looks fearfully at door.]*

[His haunted expression draws the attention of the others. One by one, they stop singing.]

ANNIE

What yo' say, Daddy Peter?

[*The singing stops, but the rhythm continues.*]

PETER

I hear death knockin' at de do'.

[*A horrified silence. All eyes turn to door.*]

LILY

[*In an awed whisper*]: It mus' be death, or Peter can't hear um.

MINGO

He ain't hear nuttin'. Nobody knock.

LILY

Yes, dey is! Somebody dere!

PETER

Death is knockin at de do'.

MARIA

Open de do' an' show um nobody ain't dere.

MINGO

Open um yo'self.

[*MARIA rises and starts toward door.*]

LILY

[*Wildly*]: I tells yo' dere is somebody dere! An' Peter can't hear no libbon' person!

[*MARIA hesitates. A loud knock is heard. The Negroes immediately burst into a pandemonium of terror. There are cries of "Oh, Gawd, hab' me'cy!" "Don't let um come in!"*

The knock is repeated, louder. Some begin to pray, but the more energetic begin piling furniture in front of door. "Bring dat dresser!" "Wedge um under de knob," etc. The door is shaken violently.]

BESS

Dat ain't no use. Ef he death, he comes in, anyway.

MARIA

[*Now the most terrified of all*]: Oh, Gawd! Gawd! Don' let um in!

[*With a sucking sound of the wind, the door slowly opens, pushing away the flimsy furniture. Shrieks of terror and prayers fill the room.*

CROWN, bent double against the wind, enters. As one by one they gain courage to look toward the door, the prayers die away. For a moment, the Negroes stare at him in silence. Then there are cries of "Crown!" "Gawd, it's Crown!"

BESS sits silent, rigid. PORGY gazes at her searchingly.]

CROWN

Yo' is a nice pa'cel ob nigger! Shut a frien' out in a storm like dis!

SERENA

Who' frien' is yo'?

CROWN

I yo' frien', Sistuh. Glad fo' see yo'! Still mopin' or has yo' got anudder man?

SERENA

I prayin' Gawd to hold back my han'.

CROWN

[*Laughing*]: Well, he'll hold it, all right. Better try de police.

MARIA

Yo' know bery well Serena too decent to gib' a nigger away to de w'ite folks.

CROWN

[*To SERENA*]: Well, between yo' Gawd an' yo' manners, yo' sho' makes t'ings soft fo' a hard nigger! [*Sees BESS.*]

Oh, dere's who I'm lookin' fo'! Why ain't yo' come say hello to yo' man?

BESS

Yo' ain't my man.

CROWN

It's sho' time I was comin' back! Dere jus' ain't no 'oman a man can leabe! [*Looking at PORGY*]: Yo' ain't

done much fo' yo'self while I been gone. Ain't dere no whole ones left?

BESS

[*Rising and facing him*]: Keep yo' mout' off Porgy!

CROWN

Well, fo' Gawd's sake! Dem humn-whiners got yo' too?

BESS

I tol' yo' I ain't goin' wid yo' no more. I stayin' wid Porgy fo' good.

CROWN

'Oman! Do yo' want to meet yo' Gawd? Come here!

BESS

[*Holding her ground*]: Porgy my man now.

CROWN

[*Laughing*]: Yo' call dat a man! Don' yo' min'. I gots de forgivin' nature, an' I goin' take yo' back.

[*Reaches for her. BESS violently repulses him.*]

BESS

Keep yo' han' off me!

SERENA

[*To CROWN*]: Ef yo' stick 'round here, yo' sure to get killed sooner or later. Den de w'ite folks goin' fig-

ger I done um. Dey gots it in de writin' now dat I been Robbins' wife. An' dey goin' lock me up fo' um anyway. So I might as well do um.

[*BESS returns to her seat by PORGY.*]

CROWN

[*Laughing*]: What makes yo' t'ink I goin' get killed? Ef Gawd want to kill me, he got plenty ob chance 'tween here an' Kittiwah Islan'. Me an' Him been havin' it out all de way from Kittiwah; first Him on top, den me. Dere ain't nuttin' He likes better'n a scrap wid a man! Gawd an' me frien'!

[*A terrific roar of wind.*]

SERENA

[*Terror-stricken*]: Yo' fool! Ain't yo' gots more sense dan talk 'bout Gawd like dat in a storm like dis! [*Another sudden gust.*]

CROWN

Gawd's laughin' at yo'!

PETER

It bery dangerous fo' we all to hab' dat blaspheming nigger 'mong us. Le's we sing unto de Lord!

[*A woman's voice leads the spiritual, "Got to Meet de Jedgment."*]

'THE WOMEN

"All I know—

SEVERAL MEN

I got to meet de Jedgment.

THE WOMEN

"All I know—

THE MEN

Got to meet de Jedgment.

THE WOMEN

"All I know—

THE MEN

Got to meet de Jedgment.

TOGETHER

All I know, All I know, All I know—

THE WOMEN

"All I moan—

THE MEN

I got to meet de Jedgment. . . ."

[As the wind subsides, the spiritual rises strong and clear. The Negroes sing and sway for a moment uninterrupted.]

CROWN

[His voice rising above the singing]: Yo' folk mus' t'ink de Lord bery easy pleased ef yo' t'ink he like to listen to dat.

[*They sing on.*]

Ef it affec' Him de way it do me, yo' is givin' um de lonesome blues.

[*They continue to sing. CROWN shouts above singing.*]

CROWN

Here, here! Cut dat! I didn't come all de way from Kittiwah to sit up wid no corpses! Dem as is in such a hurry fo' de Jedgment, all dey gots fo' do is to kiss demselves good-bye an' step out dat door. Yo', Uncle Peter, here's yo' chance. The Jim Crow's leabin' an' yo' don' need no ticket! [*Turning to SERENA*]: How 'bout yo', Sistuh? All abo'd! What, dey ain't no trab-belers?

[*A roar of wind.*]

CROWN

Dere go de train! An' yo' miss yo' chance! [*The wind rises above the singing. CROWN shouts up at ceiling*]: Dat's right, drown um out! Don' yo' listen to um sing! Dey don' gib' yo' credit fo' no taste in music. How 'bout dis one, Big Frien'? [*Sings*]:

“Rock in de mountain,
Fish in de sea,
Dere neber was a nigger
Take an 'oman from me.”

LILY

Jedus! He goin' call down Gawd' wrath on we all!
[*The wind rises to its highest pitch. The Negroes huddle together in terror. They begin to sway and moan.*

CROWN *stands in middle of room, his arms thrown wide.*
His voice rises above the wind.]

CROWN

Don' yo' hear Gawd A'mighty—laughing up dere?
Dat's right, Ole Frien'! Gawd laugh, an' Crown laugh
back! [*Throws back his head and laughs. The wind shrieks above his laugh.*] Dat's right! Yo' like um,
Gawd? I'll gib' yo' anudder verse! [*Sings*]:

“I ain't no doctor,
No' doctor' son,
But I can cool yo' feber
Till de doctor come.”

[*While he is singing, the wind suddenly ceases. The Negroes look at one another, appalled by the suddenness of the change.*]

BESS

Mus' be de storm ober.

PORGY

He jus' takin' a res'. When de wind lull like dis, he
come back soon, worse'n eber.

PORGY

CROWN

Ain't I tell yo' Gawd like um? He quiet now fo' listen. [*He bursts again into song*]:

"I laugh in de country,
I laugh in de town,
'Cause a cripple t'ink he goin'
Take an 'oman from Crown."

[*Then begins to shuffle.*] Come on, Bess! Yo' ain't one ob dese spiritual-whimperin' niggers. What, ain't yo' got no guts! Come 'long! Yo' used to be de bes' dancer in Charleston. Ef yo' don' want to dance wid Crown, mebbly yo' new man'll dance wid yo'!

[*Roars with laughter. Bess is silent. He dances a few more steps.*] Come 'long, Maria! Yo' can't tell me dese Gawd-f'arin' whiners has got yo'!

[*MARIA hesitates, CROWN dances on. Laughs.*]

Dis ole lady too fat fo' dance!

MARIA

[*Indignantly*]: Who say I'm too fat!

[*Gets lumberingly to her feet and begins to shuffle. MINGO begins to clap for them.*]

CROWN

[*Dancing*]: How 'bout ole Sportin' Life?

[*SPORTING LIFE joins in the dancing. PETER begins to clap.*]

LILY

Stop dat, yo' ole fool!

CROWN

[*Dancing near PETER and shouting in his ear*]: Dis nigger too ole fo' dance!

PETER

[*Indignant, puffing out his chest*]: Who say I too ole! [*Gets laboriously to his feet and begins a feeble shuffle.*]

[*A group are now forgetting their terror in song and dance in the middle of the room. Another group, including SERENA, are looking on disapprovingly and with fear in their faces. CLARA pays no attention to it all, gazes steadily from window. PORGY and BESS sit together, absorbed in each other. Every now and then CROWN cuts a pigeon wing before BESS. She ignores him. He laughs and dances away.*]

A wild crescendo shriek cuts across the sound of merriment. The dancers stop in their places. Everyone turns to CLARA, who is pointing from the window, her eyes wild and horror-stricken. They all rush to the window. SERENA and ANNIE are already trying to comfort CLARA.]

ANNIE

Course it's a boat upside down, but 'tain't de *Sea Gull*.

CLARA

It got red gunnels same as *Sea Gull*.

SERENA

Don' yo' know *Sea Gull* gots bird wid spread wing on he bow.

MINGO

[*Pointing*]: He goin' come up ober dere now.

SERENA

You'll see! He gots no bird! Dere! Watch um! See he——

[*She breaks off suddenly with widening eyes. CLARA cries out.*]

MINGO

Gawd! It de *Sea Gull* fo' true!

CLARA

[*Shaking off SERENA's arm*]: Lemme go!

PETER

What yo' goin' do?

SERENA

[*Holding her*]: Yo' wait now, Clara!

CLARA

Lemme go! [*Breaks from SERENA'S hold. Runs frantically to the door. Then turns back suddenly to BESS.*] Bess, yo' keep my baby till I come back. [*Thrusts the baby into BESS'S arms. Wrests the door open while the Negroes call protests after her.*]

BESS

Clara! Don' go!
[*CLARA rushes out. The door bangs shut behind her. A startled moment of silence. They all stand looking at closed door.*]

MINGO

Dat 'oman t'ink she goin' find Jake *alibe*!

BESS

Clara oughtn't to be out dere by sheself.

SPORTING LIFE

Eberyt'ing quiet now.

PORGY

Dat storm comin' back any minute.

BESS

Somebody go fo' Clara. Don' leabe she out dere alone! [*No one moves.*]

SPORTING LIFE

What de fool 'oman go fo'!

MARIA

Dey ain't nobody in here got de guts ob a chicken.

MINGO

Go 'long yo'self, Auntie. Dere ain't no wabe big nough fo' drown yo'.

PETER

[*Starting for door*]: Who goin' wid me?

BESS

[*Holding him back*]: Yo' ain't goin', Daddy Peter! Yo' too ole. [*Looking scornfully over the room*]: Ain't dere no *man* 'round here?

CROWN

Yes! Where all dem nigger been wantin' to meet de Jedgment? Go 'long! Yo' been askin' fo' somet'ing, an' yo' ain't got de gizzards to go an' get um. Now's yo' chance. [*Laughs. Goes and stands before BESS, looking sideways to see effect on her.*]

Porgy, what yo' sittin' dere fo'? Ain't yo' hear yo' 'oman calling fo' a *man*? Yes, looks to me like only *one man* 'round here! [*Again glances toward BESS; then runs to door, throwing up his arms and calling. Calls the men by name: "Go 'long, Sam!" etc.*]

All right, Ole Frien' up dere! We's on fo' annudder bout! [*Jerks door open and runs out.*]

[*A moment of silence. The stage has grown perceptibly lighter. All the Negroes crowd to the window, looking over each other's shoulders through slats of the closed shutters.*]

PETER

Dere Clara almost to de wharf already.

BESS

De watuh deep?

SERENA

Almost to she waist.

SPORTING LIFE

Gawd! How Crown splash t'rough dat watuh!

[*They watch a moment in silence.*]

A roar of wind and water. The stage darkens suddenly.

With a swift, sucking sound, the shutters fly apart. Confused cries of "Oh, Jedus! Hab' a little me'cy!" "Gawd A'might'! De storm come back!" Ain't I tell yo' he comin' worser'n eber."

SERENA

[*Kneeling centre*]: Gawd answerin' Crown!

[*Others kneel with her, shrinking close together, moaning with terror.*]

MINGO

[*At window, his voice rising high in horror*]: De wharf goin'! Gawd A'mighty!

BESS

[*Screaming futilely against the wind*]: Clara! Clara!

[*Wild shrieks of horror from all the Negroes at window. Then a terrific roar, accompanied by the splintering of timber. Then a sudden awed silence in the room. PETER turns the women from the window, blocking further view. They huddle together in the centre of the room around SERENA's group. BESS crosses to PORGY. Sits beside him, the baby in her arms. All the others fall upon their knees as with one accord they begin to sing the "Jedgment Day Spiritual."*]

BESS does not sing, but sits holding the baby close, with a rapt look in her eyes.]

"We will all pray togedduh on dat day,
We will all pray togedduh on dat day,
An' I'll fall upon my knees an' face de risin' sun.
Oh, Lord, hab' mercy on me!

"We will drink wine togedduh on dat day.
We will drink wine togedduh on dat day," etc.

"We will eat bread togedduh on dat day,
We will eat bread togedduh on dat day,
An' I'll fall upon my knees an' face de risin' sun.
Oh, Lord, hab' mercy on me!"

DADDY PETER

[*In the midst of the singing*]: Allelujah! Gawd hab' mercy on de souls ob Clara an' Crown!

[*BESS turns and looks directly at PORGY. With an expression of awe in his face, he reaches out a timid hand and touches the baby's cheek.*

The roar increases. The shutters fly back and forth. With fear-stricken eyes, the Negroes sway and pat and sing, their voices sometimes rising above the roar of the wind and sometimes drowned by it.

BESS continues silent, looking straight ahead of her, tenderness, yearning, and awe in her face. PORGY sits watching her.

The shutters crash more violently. The roar of wind and water increases. The Negroes huddle closer and sing on.]

CURTAIN

ACT FOUR

ACT FOUR

Scene One

Chimes. St. Michael's strikes one. Curtain. The court, dark except for lights around the closed shutters of a second-story room at back left and the glow from MARIA's open door.

PORGY is at his window but is only vaguely seen in the darkness. He holds the shutters partly closed so as to screen himself, while he is able to look out.

From the second-story room comes the sound of a spiritual muffled by the closed shutters.

Door to stairway at back left opens and SERENA comes out. Through the open door the spiritual is heard more plainly. It is sung by women's voices—a slow, mournful dirge.

“Nelson, Nelson, don’ let yo’ brudder condemn yo’.
Nelson, Nelson, don’ let yo’ brudder condemn yo’.
Nelson, Nelson, don’ let yo’ brudder condemn yo’.
Way down in dat lonesome grabeyahd.”

[*SERENA closes door, muffling the chant. She crosses toward her room; sees the light from MARIA's door and pauses.*]

PORGY

SERENA

Yo' still up, Maria? How come yo' ain't sing wid we women fo' de dead in de storm?

MARIA

[*Coming to her doorway*]: Some ob dose nigger' liable to sing all night, I too tired clearin' t'ing' up. My stove been wash' clean 'cross de street. An' 'sides, it break my heart to hear dese 'omans mourning fo' de mens dat provide um wid bread and what was dey lover' too. All dem fine, strong mens, dead in de storm! [*In lower voice*]: It gib' me de creeps, Serena, to t'ink how many ghost' must be listenin' 'round dis court to-night.

SERENA

[*Nervously*]: I ain't no patience wid yo' talk 'bout ghost'.

[*PORGY softly moves his shutter. SERENA starts.*]

What's dat?

MARIA

Jus' Porgy watchin' at he window. [*Draws SERENA farther from PORGY's window and lowers her voice ominously*]: What he watchin' for?

SERENA

[*Impatiently*]: How I know?

MARIA

He been dere all day. He ain't gone out on de street to beg like he always does. An' he ain't gone up wid Bess to sing for de dead in de storm.

SERENA

What ob dat?

MARIA

Crown dead, ain't he? [*Lowers voice still further*]: Mus' be he t'ink Crown' ghost is a-comin' for trouble', Bess. [*SERENA gives a scornful grunt.*] Bery well, Sistuh. But I knows dis—Gawd gib' dat cripple to see many t'ing' yo' an' me can't see—an' if he is watch for sompen, den dere is sompen for watch for.

[*BESS, the baby in her arms, opens door at left back.*

The spiritual is again heard clearly. BESS does not close door, but stands listening, holding baby close. MARIA and SERENA move over to listen.]

WOMEN'S VOICES

"Jake, Jake, don't let yo' brudder condemn yo'
Jake, Jake, don' let yo' brudder condemn yo' . . ."

BESS

Dey singin' for Jake an' Clara now. I couldn't stay.
[*The three women listen a moment in silence.*]

VOICES

"Clara, Clara, don' let yo' sistuh condemn yo'
Way down in dat lonesome grabeyahd . . ."

[*BESS softly closes door, muffling the singing. Turns toward her own door.*]

SERENA

What we all goin' to do wid dat poor mudderless baby?

BESS

[*Stopping short. Turns slowly back*]: Mus' be Clara has come back already.

SERENA

[*Looking fearfully about her*]: What yo' means?

BESS

Mus' be Clara has come back an' say sompen to yo' I ain't hear. I ain't hear her say nuttin' 'bout "we." She say, "Bess, yo' keep dis baby for me till I comes for um."

SERENA

Somebody oughts to make sure de poor chile gets a proper Christian raisin'.

BESS

Clara ain't say nuttin' to me 'bout dat, an', until she do, I goin' stan' on she las' libbin' word an' keep she baby for she till she do come back. [*Again starts toward her door. Again turns back impulsively.*] Oh, let me be, Serena. Can't yo' see I ain't de same 'oman what used to run wid Crown? Gawd wouldn't ha' let Clara gib' me dis baby if He hadn't seen I was different inside. He wouldn't ha' gib' me Porgy if he didn't want to gib me my chance. [*Looking down at baby*]: See! He t'ink already dat I he ma. I gots de big brightness all inside me to-day. I can't stan' not to hab' eberybody kind to me to-day! [*Holds baby out to SERENA.*] Look at um now, Serena—hold um a minute. Tell um he gots a good ma what goin' stan' by um! [*SERENA takes the baby reluctantly, but responds when it touches her bosom. She rocks it in her arms.*]

SERENA

Yas—I reckon yo' gots a good ma now. She gots Gawd in she heart at las'. Yo' ain't gots no cause for fret. [*Hands baby back to BESS, who draws it close.*]

BESS

Ain't yo' see, Serena, how he scroogin' down? Dis baby know already dat he done git back home. [*Turns to go.*]

SERENA

Good-night, Sistuh.

[BESS *pauses slightly, as though taken by surprise.*]

BESS

Good-night—Sistuh.

[*Goes into her room. A dim light appears in the room.*

The shutters are closed from within.

SERENA *goes to her room. MARIA begins to shut up her shop for the night. Several women carrying lanterns come from the funeral room, leaving the door open. They go out of the gate.*

The spiritual is again heard.]

THE SINGERS

“Ummmmm, Ummmmm, yeddy ole Egypt duh yowlin’
Way down in dat lonesome grabeyahd.

“Crown, Crown, don’ let yo’ brudder condemn yo’,
Crown, Crown, don’ let yo’ brudder condemn
yo’ . . .”

[*There is a sudden raucous laugh in the darkness.*

MARIA starts; then turns and peers into the shadows under SERENA’S stairs.]

MARIA

Yo’ low-live skunk! What yo’ hidin’ ’round here for?

SPORTING LIFE

[*Sauntering into the light from MARIA's window*]: Jus' listenin' to de singin'. Nice happy little tune dat. Now dey's stowin' my ole frien' Crown. [*Laughs again.*]

[*MARIA crosses quickly; closes the door, muffling the singing.*]

MARIA

[*Returning to SPORTING LIFE*]: Yo' ain't gots no shame—laughin' at dem poor 'omans singin' for dere dead mens!

SPORTING LIFE

I ain't see no sense makin' such a fuss ober a man when he dead. When a gal's man done gone, dere's plenty mens still libin' what likes good-lookin' gals.

MARIA

I know it ain't dem gals yo' is atter. Ain't yo' see Bess gots no use for yo'? Ain't yo' see she gots a man?

SPORTING LIFE

I see more'n dat, Auntie. [*Laughs as though at a joke all his own.*]

MARIA

What yo' means?

SPORTING LIFE

I see she gots two mens—an' when a 'oman gots two mens—pretty soon she ain't got none at all!

MARIA

[*Threateningly*]: What yo' means by dat—Bess gots two mens?

SPORTING LIFE

What make yo' all so sure Crown dead?

MARIA

Ain't we see de wharf wash' away under um?

SPORTING LIFE

Ain't he tell yo' Gawd an' he frien'?

MARIA

[*Alarmed*]: Yo' is tellin' me Crown ain't dead?

SPORTING LIFE

[*Nonchalantly*]: I ain't tellin' yo' nuttin', Auntie.

MARIA

[*Advancing on him threateningly*]: Yas, yo' is. Yo' tellin' me eberyting yo' knows, an' damn quick! [*Corners him.*]

SPORTING LIFE

Ob course he dead! Ain't we hear um singin' he funeral song?

MARIA

[*Grabbing his arm and bringing her face close to his*]: Yo' has seen um?

SPORTING LIFE

How can I seen um if he dead? Mus' be he ghos' I seen hangin' 'round here.

MARIA

[*Meditatively*]: So yo' has seen um. [*Menacingly*]: Well, if Bess gots two mens, dat sho' count' yo' out. [SPORTING LIFE *laughs at her. While they talk, PORGY's shutter opens inch by inch.*]

SPORTING LIFE

Dat jus' where I comes in. When a 'oman gots jus' one man, mebbly she gots um for keep. But when she gots two mens—dere's mighty apt to be carvin'!—An de cops takes de leabin's.

MARIA

[*Warningly*]: Dere ain't nobody in dis court would gib' a nigger 'way to de cops.

SPORTING LIFE

Oh, no, Auntie! But dem cops is bery smart, an' dey gots it in fo' Crown, remembuh! An', when dat time comes, yo' can tell Bess for me dat little ole Sportin' Life is still on de premises.

MARIA

[Starting for him]: Well, he ain't goin' stay bery long on my premises!

SPORTING LIFE

[Hurriedly withdrawing, but not forgetting his swagger]: Dat's all right, ole lady! I was jus' leabin'. [Saunters toward gate.]

[MARIA turns back to the closing of her shop. SPORTING LIFE glances at her over his shoulder. Sees her engaged in barring her windows. Steps swiftly into the darkness under SERENA'S stairs. MARIA finishes her work. Looks about court. Sees it apparently empty. Goes into her shop. Locks door.] A child's whimper is heard from BESS'S room, then BESS'S voice singing in the darkness.]

Hush, little baby, don' yo' cry,
Hush, little baby, don' yo' cry,
Hush, little baby, don' yo' cry,
Mother an' fadder born to die.

"Heard a thunder in de sky,
Heard a thunder in de sky,
Heard a thunder in de sky,
Mus' be Jedus passin' by.

"Heard a rumblin' in de groun',
Heard a rumblin' in de groun',
Heard a rumblin' in de groun',
Mus' be Satan turnin' 'roun'.

"Hush, little baby, don' yo' cry,
Mother an' fadder born to die."

[*Her voice trails off sleepily and is silent. During her lullaby, the last singers have come from the funeral room and crossed to their own rooms or gone out at gate. The light in the funeral room goes out. MARIA's light goes out.*

A moment of complete darkness and silence in Catfish Row; then the sudden flash of a match in the darkness reveals SPORTING LIFE about to light a cigarette. He hears something at gate and hurriedly extinguishes match, with cigarette unlit.

Against the gray background beyond the gate a gigantic figure can be seen. The gate opens very slowly and noiselessly. CROWN comes stealthily into court; very gently closes gate behind him. Picks his way slowly and silently across court. Stops to

listen. Silence. Goes on to PORGY's door. Again listens. Puts his hand on knob and softly tries door. Opens it very cautiously, inch by inch. When it is wide enough, he stealthily slips through. Inch by inch, the door closes.

A full minute of absolute silence. MARIA is in her wrapper; opens her door and stands listening. Satisfied, she is turning back.

A muffled thud sounds from PORGY's room. MARIA stops short. Stands motionless. Suddenly PORGY's laugh is heard, deep, swelling, lustful. The baby cries out.]

BESS

[Within room. Horror in her voice]: Fo' Gawd' sake, Porgy! What yo' laughin' 'bout?

PORGY

[Triumphantly]: Dat all right, honey. Don' yo' be worryin'. Yo' gots Porgy now, an' he look atter he 'oman. Ain't I don' tell yo'? Yo' gots a man now!

[MARIA crosses the court swiftly. Opens PORGY's door, goes in, and closes it behind her.

Again the flash of a match in the shadows. SPORTING LIFE lights his cigarette and continues his vigil.]

CURTAIN

Scene Two

St. Michael's chimes and strikes six. The curtain rises on the court, silent and apparently deserted.

After a moment, three white men appear outside the gate. One is the DETECTIVE who arrested PETER. The second is the CORONER, a fat, easy-going, florid man. The third is a POLICEMAN.

DETECTIVE

[*To POLICEMAN, pointing off right*]: Bring the wagon 'round to the corner, Al, and wait for us there. [*The POLICEMAN goes off right. The DETECTIVE and CORONER come in at gate.*]

This is the joint. I'd like to get something on it this time that would justify closing it up as a public nuisance and turning the lot of 'em into the street. It's alive with crooked niggers.

CORONER

[*Looking around him*]: Looks pretty dead to me.

DETECTIVE

Dead, hell! If you was on the force, 'stead of sitting down in the coroner's office, you'd know we don't make a move that isn't watched by a hundred pair of eyes. [*The CORONER looks exceedingly uncomfortable.*]

Glances apprehensively about him.]

There! Did you catch that?

[Points at a window. CORONER starts.]

They're gone now.

CORONER

Don't know as I have much business, after all. Just to get a witness to identify the body at the inquest. Maybe you'll bring one along for me when you come.

DETECTIVE

Like hell I will! You stay and get your own witness, and I'll learn you something about handling niggers, too. Now, let's see—got several leads here! The window of Robbins, the fellow Crown killed. That's her room there. And then there's the corpse's woman. She's living with the cripple in there now.

CORONER

What makes you think the buck was killed here?

DETECTIVE

[Pointing toward sea]: Found right out there.

CORONER

Found at flood tide. Might have been washed in from miles out.

DETECTIVE

A hell of a lot you know about niggers. Come on! I'll show you.

[CORONER *nods and follows* DETECTIVE. *They stop at door leading to SERENA'S room. DETECTIVE kicks it open, and shouts up the stairs.*]

DETECTIVE

Come on down, Serena Robbins, and make it damn quick!

[*There is silence for a moment, then the shutters of SERENA'S window are slowly opened, and ANNIE looks out.*]

ANNIE

Serena been sick in she bed three day, an' I been here wid she all dat time.

DETECTIVE

The hell she has! Tell her, if she don't come down, I'll get the wagon and run her in.

ANNIE

She bery sick, boss. She can't leabe she bed.

DETECTIVE

She'll leave it damn quick if she knows what's good for her.

[ANNIE disappears. A loud moaning is heard. Then ANNIE reappears accompanied by another woman. Between them they support SERENA. She wears a voluminous white nightgown, and her face and head are bound in a towel. She collapses across the window sill with a loud groan.]

Drop that racket.

[SERENA is silent.]

Where were you last night?

SERENA

[*Slowly and as though in great pain*]: I been sick in dis bed now three day an' night.

ANNIE

We been sittin' wid she an' nursin' she all dat time.

THE OTHER WOMAN

Dat's de Gawd's trut'.

CORONER

Would you swear to that?

SERENA, ANNIE, and OTHER WOMAN

[*In unison, as though answer had been learned by rote*]: Yes, boss, we swear to dat.

CORONER

[*To DETECTIVE*]: There you are—an airtight alibi.
[*DETECTIVE regards CORONER with scorn.*]

DETECTIVE

[*To SERENA*]: You know damn well you were out yesterday. I've a good mind to send for the wagon and carry you in.

[*The women are silent. DETECTIVE waits, then shouts abruptly*]:

Well?

THE THREE WOMEN

[*Again in unison*]: We swear to Gawd we been in dis room three day'.

DETECTIVE

[*Bluffing*]: Ah-hh, that's what I wanted! So you swear you were in last night, eh?

[*The women are frightened and silent.*]

And just two months ago—right here—Crown killed your husband, didn't he?

[*No answer.*]

Answer me!

[*DETECTIVE runs halfway upstairs.*]

You'll either talk here or in jail. Get that! Did Crown kill Robbins? Yes or no!

[*SERENA nods her head.*]

Exactly. And last night Crown got his right here—didn't he?

[*Women are silent except SERENA, who groans as though in pain.*]

DETECTIVE *pretends to construe groan as assent—triumphantly.*]

Yes, and how do you know he was killed if you didn't see it?

WOMEN

[*In unison*]: We ain't see nuttin', boss. We been in here t'ree day an' night, an' de window been closed.

DETECTIVE

[*Shouting*]: Look at me, Robbins! Do you mean to tell me that the man who killed your husband was bumped off right here, under your window, and you didn't know?

WOMEN

[*In unison*]: We ain't see nuttin', boss. We been in here——

DETECTIVE

[*Interrupting*]: —three days and nights, with the window closed. You needn't do that one again. [*Turning away disgustedly*]: Oh, hell! You might as well argue with a parrot cage, but you'll never break them without your own witnesses, and you'll never get 'em.

[*The three women leave the window, closing shutters.*]

Well, come along. Let's see what's here. [*Goes to LILY's and PETER's door. Throws it open.*]

Come on out here, you!

[*LILY comes to door.*]

What's your name?

LILY

[*Seeing CORONER*]: Do, Lord! Ef it ain't Mr. Jennings!

CORONER

Well, Lily! So you live here? [*To DETECTIVE*]: I'll answer for this woman. She worked for us for years.

DETECTIVE

That don't prove she don't know anything about this murder, does it? [*To LILY*]: What's your name?

LILY

[*Stubbornly*]: I don' know nuttin' bout um.

DETECTIVE

[*Shouting at her*]: I didn't ask you whether——

CORONER

Let me question her. [*Kindly to LILY*]: What's your name?

LILY

Do, Mr. Jennings! You ain't 'membuh my name is Lily Holmes?

CORONER

I know your name was Lily Holmes, but you left us to get married. What's your name now?

LILY

Lord, Mr. Jennings! I de same Lily Holmes. You ain't t'ink I goin' be responsible for no ole nigger' name? No, suh! An' I ain't gib' um my name, nedder!

DETECTIVE

[*Looking through door*]: That your husband?
[*Calling into room*]: Come on out here, you!

LILY

I'll fetch um. [*Goes into room. Returns with PETER.*]

CORONER

Why, it's the old honey man!
[*PETER is terror-stricken at sight of DETECTIVE.*]

DETECTIVE

[*Recognizing him*]: Oh, so it's you, is it? Well, Uncle, do you want to go back to jail or are you going to come clean?

LILY

[*Appealing to CORONER*]: Ain't no use to ask him nuttin'. He deaf, an' 'sides, he ain't got good sense no-how.

CORONER

But, Lily, you didn't marry the old honey man?

LILY

[*Surveying PETER*]: Whut wrong wid um?

CORONER

He's not a suitable age.

LILY

[*Puzzled*]: Whut he ain't?

CORONER

Do you think he's the right age?

LILY

Sho he de right age. He eighty-two.

CORONER

An old man like that's apt to linger on your hands.
[DADDY PETER, *hearing nothing of conversation, but feeling that he is its subject, is nodding and smiling with self-appreciation.*]

LILY

No, boss. Ef I is marry to young man an' he took sick, mebbe *he* linger on my hand. But [*Points to PETER, who smiles more amiably*] he ain't linger on my han'. He took sick—he gone.

CORONER

What did you marry him for?

LILY

Why, yo' see, boss, he like dis. Ain't yo' 'membuh how I used to hab' dem crazy fits ob misery in my stomach? I wake up in de night wid 'em. De doctor say to me, "Lily Holmes, one ob dese nights yo' goin' dead in yo' bed all by yo'self." So I t'ink I bes' marry dat nigger so as I won't go dead all by myself. But since I marry um, I gets well ob my misery, an' I ain't got no funder use for 'um.

DETECTIVE

[*To CORONER*]: Say, are you investigating a murder or just paying social calls? [*To LILY and PETER*]: That'll do for you two. Get inside.

[*LILY and PETER hurriedly return to their room.*]

CORONER

Well, seems to me I get as much out of them as you do.

DETECTIVE

Come on, let's put the cripple and his woman through. I have a hunch that's where we'll find our bacon.

[Crosses toward PORGY's door. CORONER follows.]

CORONER

All right. Go ahead. I'm watching you handle them.

DETECTIVE

You won't find the cripple much of a witness. I tried to break him in the Robbins case but he wouldn't come through. *[Kicks the door open with a bang.]* Come on out, both of you niggers. Step lively now!

[BESS helps PORGY to seat on doorstep. Then she stands by him, the baby in her arms. DETECTIVE enters room.]

CORONER

[To PORGY]: What is your name?

[PORGY looks at him keenly, then, reassured, smiles.]

PORGY

Jus' Porgy. You knows me, boss. Yo' done gib' me plenty ob pennies on Meetin' Street.

CORONER

Of course! You're the goat man. I didn't know you without your wagon. Now, this nigger Crown—you knew him by sight, didn't you?

PORGY

PORGY

[*As though remembering with difficulty*]: Yes, boss —I 'membuh um when he used to come here, long ago.

CORONER

You could identify him, I suppose.

[*PORGY looks blank.*]

You'd know him if you saw him again, I mean.

PORGY

[*Slowly*]: Yes, boss, I'd know um. [*With dawning apprehension*]: But I ain't care none 'bout see um.

[*CORONER laughs. Makes note in notebook. Puts it in pocket. Calls to DETECTIVE.*]

CORONER

Well, I'm through. Let's pull freight.

DETECTIVE

[*Appears in doorway; looks knowingly at PORGY and BESS*]: Mighty clean floor in there. Funny it got its first scrubbing in twenty years this morning.

BESS

I scrubs my floor ebery week. You can ask these people here 'bout um.

DETECTIVE

[*Sneering*]: Oh, yes! More witnesses! [*Then triumphantly*]: But you missed the blood under the bed this time. [*Jerks out his gun, covers PORGY, shouts*]: Come,

out with it! You killed Crown, didn't you? Speak up, or I'll hang you sure as hell!

[*PORGY and BESS sit silent, with eyes lowered.*]

Well?

BESS

I ain't understan', boss. Dere ain't no blood dere, an' nobody ain't kill Crown in our room.

CORONER

[*Drawing DETECTIVE aside*]: For God's sake, Duggan, let's call it a day. The cripple couldn't kill a two-hundred-pound buck and tote him a hundred yards.

DETECTIVE

You don't know much about niggers, do you?

CORONER

[*Turning toward gate*]: Anyway, I'm through, and I've got to get along. It's 'most time for my inquest.

[*BESS and PORGY go swiftly inside. Close door.*]

DETECTIVE

[*Following CORONER reluctantly*]: Got your witness?

CORONER

Yeh.

[*They go out gate and off to left.*]

Again the court is deserted and silent. For a moment, there is no sound or movement.

Then, in one of the rooms, a voice is raised singing]

VOICE

"Ain't it hard to be a nigger!
Ain't it hard to be a nigger!"

[Another voice joins, then another. In a moment, the empty court is ringing with the song, sung mockingly, triumphantly.]

Another moment, and doors and shutters begin to fly open. The Negroes come from their doors or lean from their windows, and the court is quickly filled with life and movement. They are all singing.

SERENA'S door flies open, and she comes out singing. She is fully dressed and carries a great basket of clothes, which she begins to hang on line while she sings.

BESS helps PORGY on to the doorstep and sits beside him, the baby in her arms. Both are singing. LILY comes out carrying the honey tray. PETER follows. She balances it on his head. SCIPIO drives PORGY'S goat cart in through archway.

Then someone breaks into a wilder tune, and all the others instantly change to the new song.]

"Sit down! I can't sit down!
Sit down! I can't sit down!
My soul's so happy dat I can't sit down!"

[A Negro near the gate looks out, suddenly gives a loud hiss and waves his arms—in a warning gesture.]

The song ceases abruptly. SERENA grabs her wash from the line. The Negroes return swiftly and silently to their rooms. Doors and shutters close stealthily.

BESS attempts to help PORGY to his feet, but, seeing that they have no time, he sinks down again on his doorstep and pretends to doze. BESS goes inside, closes door. SCIPIO drives the goat back through archway.

The court is again silent, and deserted by all but PORGY.

A POLICEMAN enters from left. Comes in at gate. Looks about court. Sees PORGY, who is apparently oblivious of him. Crosses to PORGY.]

POLICEMAN

Hey, you!

[PORGY opens his eyes.]

You're Porgy, aren't you? I've got something for you.

[Holds out paper. PORGY looks at it in alarm. POLICEMAN speaks kindly.]

You needn't be afraid to take it. It's just a summons as a witness at the coroner's inquest. All you've got to do is view the body and tell the coroner who it is.

[PORGY is suddenly terror-stricken. His voice shakes.]

PORGY

PORGY

I gots to go an' look on Crown's face?

POLICEMAN

Yes, that's all.

PORGY

Wid all dem w'ite folks lookin' at me?

POLICEMAN

Oh, cheer up! I reckon you've seen a dead nigger before. It'll be all over in a few minutes.

[*Bess appears in doorway, listening, her eyes wide with horror.*]

PORGY

Dere ain't goin' be no nigger in dat room 'cept me?

POLICEMAN

Just you and Crown—if you still call him one.
[*Turns away.*]

PORGY

[*Scarcely able to speak for terror*]: Boss—I couldn' jus' bring a 'oman wid me? I couldn't eben carry my—my 'oman?

POLICEMAN

[*Slightly impatient*]: No, you can't bring anyone. Say, you're the cripple, aren't you? I'll get the wagon

and carry you down. And as soon as you've seen Crown, you can come home. [*Starts for gate.*]

PORGY

[*Desperately*]: Boss——

POLICEMAN

Now, listen, I've summoned you, and you've got to go, or it's contempt of court. I'll call the wagon for you. [*Goes out gate and off to left.*]

[*As soon as he has gone, doors open stealthily. The Negroes come out and gather about PORGY, speaking in low, frightened tones.*]

PORGY

Oh, Gawd! Whut I goin' to do?

BESS

Yo' gots to go, Porgy. Mebby yo' can jus' make like to look at um an' keep yo' eye' shut.

MARIA

Yo' goin' be all right, Porgy. Yo' jus' goin' to be a witness.

SPORTING LIFE

I ain't so sure ob dat.

[*They all look at him in alarm.*]

I don' know who done de killin'. All I knows is, when de man what done um goes in dat room, Crown' wounds begin to bleed.

PORGY

PORGY

[*Terror-stricken*]: Oh, Jedus!

SPORTING LIFE

Dat's one way de cops got ob tellin' who done um.

PORGY

[*In a panic; moaning*]: I can't look on he face! Oh, Gawd! What I goin' to do!

SPORTING LIFE

[*Taking command of the situation*]: Listen to me! Yo' do jus' as I say an' yo' won't hab' to look on he face.

PORGY

What I do, Sporting Life?

SPORTING LIFE

Get busy, yo' niggers. We gots to get Porgy out ob here! Get de goat, Scipio. Here, Mingo! Yo' stan' by to gib' me a han' wid Porgy.

BESS

Don' yo' go, Porgy! He can't get away!

SPORTING LIFE

He gots to get away or dey'll hang um sure.

PORGY

Oh, Gawd!

[*SCIPIO has brought the goat cart. SPORTING LIFE and MINGO are lifting PORGY in while he moans with terror and mutters unintelligibly.*]

SPORTING LIFE

Now, listen! Make straight for Bedens Alley. When yo' gets dere, turn in an' lie low.

MINGO

Bedens Alley too far. He'll neber make it.

SPORTING LIFE

Shut up, Mingo. I'm runnin' dis. All right, Porgy, light out!

MARIA

Quick! Start um!

BESS

Make um run!

[*The clang of the patrol wagon bell is heard approaching rapidly. The Negroes stand as though paralyzed with terror.*]

MINGO

Here dey is!

BESS

Oh, Gawd! It's too late now!

SPORTING LIFE

No, it ain't. Here, yo' niggers, get um in dere!

[Directs them to the archway. They drive the goat through, then mass in front of archway, hiding PORGY from view.]

SPORTING LIFE *saunters across the court as though he had nothing to do with the affair, and awaits developments.*

The patrol bell rings more slowly as the wagon slows down, then comes to a stop at left of gate just out of view.

The POLICEMAN again comes in at gate. Looks toward PORGY's door. Crosses to it abruptly. Throws it open.]

POLICEMAN

Hey, you there! *[Runs to gate. Calls.]* Jim! The fool's trying to make a get-away! Come on! *[Turns to the Negroes.]* Where did he go?

[They look at him with blank faces.]

All right! *[Starts for PORGY's door.]*

[The SECOND POLICEMAN enters from left.]

You take that side, Jim. I'll take this. *[Goes into PORGY's room.]*

[SECOND POLICEMAN goes through SERENA's door. As soon as both POLICEMEN are out of sight, the

Negroes beckon to PORGY, who drives from archway and quickly toward gate.

The shutters of an upper window are thrown open, and the FIRST POLICEMAN looks out.]

POLICEMAN

Hey, you! What d'you think you're doing?

[PORGY leans forward and wrings the goat's tail. The astonished animal leaps forward and goes out gate at a run.]

Jim!

[The SECOND POLICEMAN throws open shutters of room opposite and leans from window.]

Look there! *[Points to PORGY as he disappears off left.]*

[Both POLICEMEN burst into peals of laughter.

The Negroes follow to gate, pushing it shut, looking out through bars.]

SECOND POLICEMAN

He must want to have a race.

[The two POLICEMEN leave the windows and a minute later come running from doors.]

FIRST POLICEMAN

Racing the wagon! That's good!

[They start toward gate.]

SECOND POLICEMAN

[*Laying a hand on the other's arm*]: Say, let him get a start.

[*They double up with laughter.*]

This is going to be good!

FIRST POLICEMAN

Here, you niggers! Get away from the gate.

[*The Negroes stand back. He opens gate.*]

Come on now! We're off!

[*They run out gate, still shouting with laughter. They run off right. The Negroes press close about gate to watch.*]

The clang of the patrol wagon bell is heard as the vehicle sets off at top speed.]

ANNIE

Oh, Gawd! Dey'll get um!

MARIA

Ef he can jus' git 'round de corner!—

LILY

—Mebby dey won't fin' um.

BESS

[*Turning hopelessly away*]: 'Tain't no use.

[*The tension in the crowd of watchers suddenly re-*

laxes, and their faces assume hopeless expressions.]

Dey got um?

LILY

Yeh. Dey got um.

SERENA

Dey putting him an' de goat all two in de wagon.

[BESS sits hopelessly on her doorstep. The other Negroes return to their various rooms and tasks.

SPORTING LIFE saunters across court and sits down on step by BESS.

The stage is darkening. A light appears in a window.]

BESS

Oh, Gawd! Dey goin' carry um to look on Crown' face!

SPORTING LIFE

[Laughing]: Don' yo' worry none 'bout dat, Sistuh. Dat nigger ain't a witness now. Dey goin' lock um up in de jail.

MINGO

[At gate]: Dat's de trut'. Dey done turn de wagon 'round toward de jail.

BESS

Well, dat better'n makin' um look on Crown.
[Fearfully]: Not for long, Sportin' Life?

SPORTING LIFE

[*Sympathetically*]: No, not for long. Jus' a yeah, mebbby.

BESS

A yeah.

SPORTING LIFE

Contempt ob court—dat's a serious offence.
[*Bess drops her face into her hands.*]

Jus' like I tol' yo'. Nobody home now but Bess an' ole Sportin' Life.

BESS

I ain't gots no time fo' yo'.

SPORTING LIFE

[*Laughing*]: Fo' sho' yo' has. Yo' jus' gots nice little vacation now fo' play 'round wid yo' ole frien'. Contempt ob court—dat serious offence. Dat nigger ain't be back heah fo' a yeah.

BESS

[*Alarmed*]: Sportin' Life, yo' ain't t'ink dey puts Porgy up fo' a yeah?

SPORTING LIFE

A yeah for sho'. Cheer up, Sistuh! Gib' me yo' han'.
[*He takes her hand. She is too preoccupied to resist.*]

Ole Sportin' Life got de stuff fo' scare away de lonesome blues.

[*Pours powder into her hand. BESS looks down at it.*]

BESS

Happy dus'! [*Gazes at the powder with fascinated horror.*] I ain't want none ob dat stuff, I tells yo'.

SPORTING LIFE

Ain't nuff ter hurt er flea.

BESS

Take dat stuff away, nigger! [*But she continues to hold it in her hand.*]

SPORTING LIFE

Jus' a little touch fo' ole time' sake.

[*BESS suddenly claps her hand over her face. When she takes it away, it is empty. SPORTING LIFE smiles with satisfaction.*]

Dat de t'ing, ain't it? An' 'membuh, dere's plenty more where dat come from.

Dere's a boat to Noo Yo'k to-morruh an' I'm goin'. [*Pauses significantly. BESS says nothing.*]

Why yo' such a fool, Bess? What yo' goin' to do a whole yeah here by yo'self? Now's yo' chance.

[*BESS leaps to her feet, her eyes blazing. She glares at SPORTING LIFE with contempt and hatred.*]

PORGY

BESS

Yo' low, crawlin' houn'! Git 'way from my door, I tells yo'! Lef it, yo'! Rattlesnake! Dat's whut yo' is! Rattlesnake!

[*While she berates him, SPORTING LIFE lights a cigarette, continues to sit on step.*]

SPORTING LIFE

Rave on, Sistuh! But I'll be right here when yo' is wantin' dat second shot.

[*BESS runs suddenly past him into her room. Slams door behind her. SPORTING LIFE sits smiling to himself and leisurely blowing smoke rings.*]

[*MARIA comes to her doorway. Sees him. Crosses to him.*]

MARIA

[*Contemptuously*]: What yo' waitin' 'round here for?

SPORTING LIFE

Jus' waitin'. [*Smokes contentedly.*]

MARIA

What yo' t'ink yo' goin' to get?

SPORTING LIFE

[*With shrug of shoulders*]: Uummmmm—jus' waitin'.

MARIA

[*Turning scornfully away*]: Yo' don' know Bess.
[*Recrosses to her shop.*]

[SPORTING LIFE *watches her till she has reached her doorstep.*]

SPORTING LIFE

[*In a low voice, not intended for MARIA to hear*]:
You don' know happy dus'.

[MARIA *does not hear. Goes into shop; closes door.*

SPORTING LIFE *continues to wait. St. Michael's
chimes the half hour.*]

CURTAIN

Scene Three

Chimes. Two o'clock. The court is as usual, except that PORGY's door and shutters are closed. Negroes are coming and going about their tasks.

PETER, LILY, and MINGO sit at MARIA's table. She is busy serving them. SCIPIO is playing near the gate. SERENA sits near her door rocking a baby in her arms and singing, "Hush little baby, don't you cry." MARIA goes into her shop.

PORGY drives up outside the gate and calls softly to SCIPIO. His air is one of mystery.

PORGY

Here, Scipio! Here Porgy back from jail. Open de gate an' don't make no noise.

[SCIPIO goes reluctantly to gate, opens it, and leads the goat inside. SERENA looks up, sees PORGY, stops singing in the middle of a bar, and hunches over the baby as though to hide it.

Various Negroes about the court look up, see him, and go silently into their rooms.

PORGY is too preoccupied with his secret to notice anything. He drives over and stops beside MARIA's table. LILY, PETER, and MINGO half rise, then see that it is too late to escape, and resume their seats.]

PORGY

[In a joyous but guarded voice]: Shhh, don't nobody let on yet dat I is home again. I gots a surprise for Bess, an' I ain't want she to know till I gots eberyt'ing ready.

[He does not notice that the others are silent and embarrassed, and, reaching into the wagon, commences to remove packages, talking volubly all the time. He unwraps a harmonica and hands it to SCIPIO.]

Here, boy. T'row away dat ole mout' organ you gots an' start in on dis one. See, he gots picture ob brass band on um. Work on dat, an' fus' t'ing dat yo' know,

yo'll be playin' wid de orphans. [*He turns to LILY.*]

Here, gal, hol' up yo' head. Dat's right. I nebber did like dem ole funeral bonnet Peter buy fo' yo'. [*Unwraps a gorgeous, feather-trimmed hat and hands it to her.*] Now get underneath dat, an' make all de red bird and de blue jay jealous.

[*LILY takes hat, but is unable to speak her thanks.*

PORGY is hurrying on, and does not notice this.

He opens a package and shakes out a gay dress, then lays it on the table.]

Now, dat's de style for Bess. She is one gal what always look good in red. [*He opens a hat and places it beside the dress.*] I reckon I is de fus' nigger anybody roun' here ebber see what go to jail po', an' leabe dere rich. But Porgy' luck ridin' high now. Ain't nuttin' can stop um. When de buckra search me in de jail, I all de time gots my lucky bones in my mout'—see! an time I get settle' in my new boardin' house, I start to go right t'rough dem odder crap-shootin' nigger' like Glory Hallelujah.

[*He takes a package from the cart, opens it, and holds up a baby dress.*]

Now, ain't dis de t'ing! Course, de baby ain't really big 'nough for wear dress yet, but he goin' grow fas'. You watch, he goin' be in dat dress by de fus' frost.

[*Continues his story.*]

Yas, suh! dere warn't no stoppin' dem bones. Dey jus' gone whoopin' right t'rough dat jail, a-pullin' me

after 'em. And den, on de las' day, de big buckra guard hear 'bout it, an' he come an' say I gots to gib up de bones. But I been seein' um roll wid de jailer in de watch house, an' I know he weakness. I ask dat buckra if he ain't likes me to teach um how to sing lucky to de bones 'fore I gib' dem up, an' 'fore he git 'way I done gone t'rough um for t'ree dollar an' seben cent an' dis shirt. [*He proudly exhibits shirt that he is wearing. His purchases are now all spread out on the table, and he looks from them to the faces of the Negroes.*]

Now it time to call Bess. Oh, Bess. Here Porgy come home.

[*There is a moment of absolute silence. LILY gets to her feet, buries her face in her hands, and runs to her room. PETER starts to follow. MINGO rises and goes toward MARIA's door.*]

Here, Lily, Peter, Mingo, where you all goin'? What de hell kin' ob a welcome dis for a man what been in jail for a week, an' for de contemp' ob court at dat. Oh, now I see. Well, yo' ain't gots to min' Bess an' me. All de time we wants to hab we frien' wid us. Eben now, we ain't wants to be jus' by weself.

[*They continue to withdraw. He looks about him in growing surprise, and discovers SERENA hunched up silently over the baby.*]

Why, hello! Dere's Serena. Yo' sho' work fas', Sistuh. I ain't been gone a week, an' yo' done gots a new baby. [SERENA rises hurriedly, exposing baby for first time.]

Here, hold on. Let me see dat chile. Dat's Bess's baby, ain't it? Where yo' get um? Where Bess, anyhow? She ain't answer me.

SERENA

[*Calling*]: Maria, come out dat cookshop. Here Porgy come home. *You* gots to talk wid um.

[*Porgy drives to his own door.*]

PORGY

Bess! Ain't yo' dere, Bess?

[*Maria comes to her doorway. Porgy turns to her, his eyes wide with alarm.*]

Where's Bess?

[*Maria sits on her doorstep. Porgy turns his goat and drives over to her.*]

Tell me quick. Where's Bess?

[*Maria does not answer.*]

Where? Where?

MARIA

[*Trying to put on a bold face*]: Ain't we tell yo' all along, Porgy, dat 'oman ain't fit for yo'?

PORGY

[*Frantically*]: I ain't ask yo' opinion. Where' Bess?

[*They all shrink from telling him. Each evades, trying to leave it to the others.*]

PORGY

MARIA

Dat dirty dog Sportin' Life make us all t'ink yo' is
lock up for a yeah.

PORGY

Won't somebody tell me, where Bess?

SERENA

Bess very low in she min' 'cause she t'ink yo' is gone
for a yeah. [*Pauses, unable to come to the point.*]

PORGY

But I home *now*. I want to tell she I is here.

SERENA

She gone back to de happy dus' an' de red eye. She
been very drunk two day'.

PORGY

But where she now? I ain't care if she was drunk. I
want she now.

LILY

Dat houn' Sportin' Life was foreber hangin' 'round
and gettin' she to take more dope.

PORGY

[*Driving again to his own door. Calls*]: Bess! Bess!
Won't nobody tell me——

MARIA

[*Following him*]: Ain't we tellin' yo'? Dat Houn' Sportin' Life——

PORGY

[*Desperately*]: I ain't ask 'bout Sportin' Life. Where Bess?

SERENA

She gone, Porgy. An' I done take dis chile to gib um a Christian raisin'——

PORGY

Where she gone?

SERENA

Dat gal ain't neber had Gawd in she heart, an' de debil get um at last.

MARIA

'Tain't de debil. De happy dus' done for um.

PORGY

[*Wildly*]: You—Bess?—Yo' ain't means Bess dead?

SERENA

She worse dan dead.

LILY

Sportin' Life carry she away on de Noo Yo'k boat.
[*They are all silent, gazing at PORGY. He, too, is silent for a moment.*]

PORGY

PORGY

Where dat dey take she?

MINGO

Noo Yo'k.

MARIA

Dat's way up Nort'.

PORGY

[*Pointing*]: It dat way?

MARIA

It take two days by de boat. Yo' can't find um.

PORGY

I ain't say I can find um. I say, where it is?

MARIA

Yo' can't go after she. Ain't yo' hear we say yo' can't find um?

ANNIE

Ain't yo' know Noo Yo'k mos' a t'ousand mile' from here?

PORGY

Which way dat?

LILY

[*Pointing*]: Up Nort'—past de Custom House.

[*PORGY turns his goat and drives slowly with bowed head toward the gate.*]

MARIA

Porgy, I tells yo' it ain't no use!

LILY

Dat great big city. Yo' can't find um dere!

SERENA

Ain't we tells yo'——

[*But PORGY is going on toward gate as if he did not hear, and they cease to protest and stand motionless watching him.*]

As PORGY reaches the gate, SCIPIO silently opens it. PORGY drives through and turns to left, as LILY pointed.

St. Michael's chimes the quarter hour. The gate clangs shut.]

CURTAIN





